

THE
FATAL MARRIAGE:

A
NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. HOOKHAM,

At his Circulating Library, NEW BOND STREET,
Corner of BRUTON STREET.

M.DCC.LXXIV.

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BY J. H. STODOLSKY.



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M. HODGKINS.

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Miss FAULKLAND to Miss HARVEY.

Ashly Grove.

UPON my honour, Harriot, if

my father goes on at this rate, I shall

be tempted to clope with the first

smart red; or indeed any other coat

that comes in my way—even our

mild, gentle Fanny is nearly out of

patience

VOL. I.

B

patience

patience with the monastic stile of life
 he compels us to lead.—Most other
 fathers take some little pains to set off
 their daughters to the best advantage,
 with the view of getting them agree-
 ably and advantageously settled in
 life—but ours, (and heaven knows
 it is not from the superabundance of
 his affection,) seems determined to
 make absolute nuns of us. You, my
 dear, rave most pethetically at his
 refusing to let us accept your kind
 invitation—so have we, child, like
 any two heroines in tragedy; but,
 alas! what avails it?—nothing—
 Your party, no doubt, took place
 without us; and while we were vent-
 ing our spleen on every thing that
 came

came in our way, you were flirting most delightfully with every beau that came in yours — “ ’Tis pitiful ; “ yea, ’tis wondrous pitiful : ” — and the worst is, I see no hopes of a change for the better. Some girls have cousins and aunts by the dozen, who, if so inclined, have it in their power to show them a thousand civilities ; but our good father seems to be the only twig left of his whole generation, except his plump soul of a sister ; who, to do her justice, is, (I was going to say) worth a thousand of him, but luckily recollected the speech would have been none of the most respectful, and so forth — she, I must say, does all she can to

soften the inflexibility of his temper; and frequently feels the effects of it for her pains. Our dear Charles is all in all with him; while we, poor girls, are looked upon as a mere incumbrance:—his whole soul is set on saving every farthing he can, in order to leave his darling heir an affluent fortune—This is his plan; well do I know it, and well does our handsome brother merit his affection—this we readily allow—but it is hard he has not a little to spare for us also. He perpetually says girls should have no fortunes; it only renders them objects for fellows, who have none, to seek after, who would marry them merely for
 their

their cash, were they as old and ugly as the d - - - l. — Is not this doctrine a well-contrived apology for his ridiculous maxim? It is well known he has a large estate; but he takes all imaginable care to let it be as well known we are to expect a very slender share of it: — so unless our charms should have the good fortune to captivate some superannuated, humdrum soul of an old batchelor, or widower, who may be seized with the whim of fighting for a handsome young wife, to nurse and see them decently laid in their graves, we may even make up our minds to figure as spinsters till we go quietly to ours — nay I am fully persuaded he

has formed hopes of this joyous nature; since to such beings as above described, and only to such, are his castle gates opened, without visible reluctance. He inveighs most powerfully against the present race of young idle fellows, as he calls them; and swears he does not know one to whom he would consent to give us, were they even to take us without a sixpence. This he says, Harriot; but I beg leave to doubt the fact; for I believe in my conscience he would rejoice to be fairly and honourably quit of us. Honourably, I say; because, to do him justice, I must add, no man can be more scrupulously delicate in that article. His ideas of female

female decorum, propriety, &c. &c. are even outrageously strict; — yet he sees not that his conduct and behaviour to us would almost excuse us to the world, were we, in an evil hour, to but let me not suppose it: — no, Harriot, thank heaven, highly disagreeable as our situation is, I trust we shall never be tempted to swerve from the paths of virtue; nay, even of our duty to him, unless he should indeed drive us to extremities; which, piqued as I am at this moment at him, I will not believe he will. — As to the article of fortune, I make myself exceedingly easy about it; for well do

I know our noble-minded, generous Charles' sentiments. Whatever my father may actually mean to do in that affair, well do I know my brother would set all those matters to rights when he comes into possession. He has said it a thousand times; and I have not a doubt either of his veracity or tender affection. Would to heaven his regiment were returned from that vile America: it cannot now, I think, be long ere it does return, since we have finished our matters there most gloriously you know. A joyous day will it be to poor Fanny and me, you may well believe. Add your prayers to ours,

my

my dear, that it may not be a very
distant one; and never more presume
to doubt my being most truly

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

The same to the same.

SITUATED as we are, you will confess it is exceedingly natural for us to make the most of any incident likely to afford either an hour's innocent amusement, or a subject to fill up a page or epistle :—one which occurred a day or two ago has already served the first purpose, and is now going to serve the second — we have honoured it with the pompous name of an adventure : you may call it what you please. The morning of the above-mentioned day, my father and aunt were set at piquet ; I was scribbling to you ; and Fanny, with
her

her lute, had strolled to our favourite summer house, from which, you know, we have so fine and extensive a view of the adjacent country.——

I must now desire you will recal to your memory the particular situation of it, that you may the more easily comprehend me.——It stands on an eminence, not very far from the park wall; which has, as you must remember, not only a door into the said park, but likewise a key:—nor can you have forgot that key, except when he is graciously pleased to indulge us with a more extensive ramble than we can take in our garden, is constantly deposited most saugly in my father's coat pocket:—please

also to recollect that there is no road through our park, except that which leads to our enchanted castle——I hope you are perfectly clear in regard to all these important matters.——

Well! my dear, here was the gentle Fanny sitting, and with her lute, accompanied with her melodious voice, giving a lesson to the nightingales around her; when hearing a noise like the trampling of horses, she turned her head and saw——guess what she saw, Harriot——a gentleman and his servant; the former gazing on her with visible marks of admiration in his most engaging and expressive countenance. Hers was instantly, as you may easily
 conceive,

conceive, covered with a rosy blush; and though the high wall between them preserved her from every possibility of danger, supposing this hero came with any wicked design, which by the bye we have neither a right nor any violent inclination to suppose.—She started, and hurried towards the house, in spite of a thousand signs he made intreating her to bless his sight a few moments longer with her presence. He might, indeed, have made her hear his request; but then, child, he must have raised his voice to a scream; ——— and how would the tender, soft things he would, no doubt, have uttered, appeared in so loud a key?—horrid—

and so ends my story. — Is this all the mighty matter? cries Harriot — Really, my good friends, you have, as you say, given a very pompous appellation to what those less read in novels and romances would look upon as nothing supernatural — True, child; — but did I not begin by telling you we found it convenient to make the most of every thing of that agreeable nature we met with. — For you to descry a smart beau hovering round your mansion, would, indeed, be nothing extraordinary; but here it is another affair. — Besides, how came he there? as I said before. There is no public road through the park — He came

not to the house—In short, we have set him down as a knight errant, attended by his faithful squire; and take it for granted he will never rest till he has freed the beautiful fair one, so unexpectedly discovered, from her apparent state of captivity. This is the light in which we choose to look upon it, by way of amusement; and highly it has amused us, I give you my word. — We have formed a thousand ridiculous conjectures, and built as many airy castles on the strength of it. — Not very solid foundation, you'll say: — but no matter. They will probably last as long as we are in the humour to occupy them. We have never
since

since ventured to our summer house,
 though there is no great reason to
 suppose, seriously speaking, we have
 any great chance of seeing him again:
 but in case the whim should have
 seized him to make a second ap-
 pearance, 'tis as well for us not to
 make ours. I beg you will give us
 credit for our prudence: all things
 considered, I can tell you, there is
 no small merit in it. I believe it
 costs poor Fanny some slight pangs
 to act thus wisely; for she tells me,
 short as the interview was, she yet
 saw enough of him to pronounce
 with certainty, that he is elegant,
 charming, and all that. To-morrow,
 we have never seen them. We have never, however,

however, we do mean to take a stroll that way, and shall, without scruple, seat ourselves there as usual. — It would be too great a sacrifice to give up our favourite spot intirely. I could neither play, sing, read, nor work half so agreeably any where else. If he, too, has happened to set his heart on the very spot he first saw her on, why, my dear, there is no help for it. We must take care to keep the wall between us, that is all; and while we do this, I think we have little to fear. So adieu.

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

The

The same to the same.

THIS comes of locking up daughters, my dear. I begin to think it is not altogether bad policy — had there been but a pair of knights instead of one, I should have been quite delighted with our fate: but all in good time; a second may come, and then — Aye, what then? — Why then, child, our adventures would be in the most delightful train imaginable. At present, indeed, I make but an insignificant figure, merely confidant to the flurried, palpitating Fanny, who is at this moment overwhelmed with a thousand pleasing hopes,

hopes, and ten thousand fears; which
 you see is ten to one; a woeful odds
 against her, to say truth: — but, as I
 was going to say, had not my pen,
 as usual, run away with me, we
 yesterday, having first seen my father
 safely seated at the card table, sallied
 forth to the scene of action. A cer-
 tain something, what heaven knows,
 prompted us both to sit longer at our
 toilet that day than usual. Fanny,
 it is plain, had hopes, which she ne-
 vertheless would not own. But why
 should I have given my dress a mo-
 ment's thought? yet I did, my dear;
 and the consequence was, we set out
 arm in arm, adorned with all the
 elegant simplicity of a pair of wood
 nymphs.

nymphs. The day was uncommonly fine; an unclouded sky gave an extensive view of the country; our books lay quietly by us on the table; we did not find ourselves in a reading humour. Fanny, however, took up her lute. This did not so much engage her as to prevent her eyes from frequently wandering on every side, in quest of an object, I plainly saw, she was very anxious, though, I believe, hopeless, of seeing again. I now added my voice to it; and we continued singing, playing, and chatting, by turns for an hour or more. No hopes, Fanny, cried I, at last — he is a faithless, perjured swain, my dear; so we may as well be going.

Dear

Dear Clara, replied she; did you really then suppose I was simple enough either to wish or expect? — At that instant her pretty speech was interrupted by the sight of the very knight in question. — Heavens! exclaimed the dear blushing girl, there! there he is! Clara, as I live — She instinctively caught hold of my arm — Let us go, cried she, scarce able to breathe; let us go — what must he think to find us here again? — Think! replied I, how ridiculous! did he then imagine we were to desert it for ever on his account? Sit down, my love, and compose yourself. I am determined to have a better view of him. — Oh! Clara, what can the man mean
by

by Really, my dear, I know not, said I, interrupting her, with a smile; but if he has a meaning, it would be cruel not to give him an opportunity of telling what it is. For my part, I long to know by what means he proposes to unburden his conscience; for certainly something lies heavy on it, or he would not thus haunt our dwelling. By this time he was come as near us as the envious wall would let him. He saw us—bowed—kissed his hand in the most tender, yet respectful manner. We slightly returned his bow with looks which we meant should signify our doubts whether he was a person of our acquaintance; and

and then drawing back, as if convinced he was not, we were going to retire. Observing our motion, he instantly drew a letter from his pocket, and seeing it had caught our eye, he pressed it to his lips, most dexterously darted it over the wall, and galloped off; — with a view, no doubt, that we might go in quest of his epistle, lest, if delayed, it might fall into other hands. — The question now was, Ought she to open it? — ought it not to be returned, the seal unbroken, &c. &c. — These important doubts we were endeavouring to clear up while searching for it among the shrubs where it had fallen. — How it would have been decided I know

know not ; but on finding it, the matter would admit of no farther argument ; for the fly wretch, awre, I presume, of our scruples, had put no seal to it — I will honestly confess I was not sorry for it, nay I admired his art ; had it been sealed, we might possibly have been tempted to do the wondrous prudent thing ; but being open, show me the mis of seventeen who would not have taken a peep at it. — I happened to see it first ; and taking it up, Well, Fanny, cried I, smiling, what say you ? shall I endeavour to throw it after the impertinent writer ? or will you allow me to take one single peep at its contents ? You would not, I am certain, know touch

touch it with the tip of your finger for the world. — Nay it would be the highest possible breach of decorum, you know. — Dear Clara! how can you be so teasing? Well, well, it shall go then, said I — I will not be so teasing — After all, what is it to us what it contains? —

Going, — going, — going, cried I, raising my arm as if on the point of keeping my word — just a going, Fanny. — Stop! do stop one moment, said she, blushing; surely there can be no great harm in seeing whether the man writes a legible hand —

Very true, my dear; and of that, you know, one may give a shrewd guess by the address — Let me see —

"To the most lovely of her sex."—
 Charming! cried I—but, pray my
 dear, do you pretend a claim to it on
 those terms?—How dearly you love
 to torment one, Clara!—Why dont
 you at once, then, Fanny, be ho-
 nest, and tell me you are dying with
 impatience to read every line of it.—
 There,—there—take it, my dear;
 and much good may it do you.—I
 wish you had seen her emotions,
 Harriot, while her fine eyes were
 running it over. On my life I ne-
 ver saw a creature express such a va-
 riety of emotions. A fear, however,
 of having done wrong was visibly
 predominant.—Oh, Clara! cried she,
 as she gave it into my hand, what
 would

would my father say to this! — Aye, what indeed, child, replied I; but let me first read it, that I may know what we are to say to it; for that is the first thing to be considered—Having finished it, I returned it to her. Well! Clara, what are we to think of it? cried she. — Think! my dear, why that nature has given him a most insinuating tongue; which I pray heaven may never be employed to tempt my Fanny to do any thing inconsistent with her duty or her honour. — If we are to believe all he says, we have no reason to suppose he has any such design — But let us remember, my love, were it otherwise, he might nevertheless write as

eloquently, and give as favourable an account of himself as he here does. We have only the word of a stranger for all these fine things, my dear. They may be true; but, alas! they may be false. No doubt they may, replied she, with quickness; yet, Clara, one need not at once conclude they are. What motive can he have for deceiving me? that would imply premeditation; whereas it is pretty plain we must ascribe the whole to mere accident. He declares himself a gentleman, a man of fortune, a man of honour. What right have we to doubt his word? his looks, Clara—Aye, my dear, his looks, as you say, would persuade one of any thing:

thing: even the very transient view I have had of them plainly tells me, they are most insinuatingly dangerous; but I see by that agreeable flutter I must not be too severe in my conjectures. — Indeed, replied she, I blame you not; too well do I know your motives for being cautious and slow of belief; nay, I honour you for it. Alas! but for the advice of a dear friend like my Clara, what could I now do? — And even your sage Clara, said I, knows not what to advise. — It is a delicate point: he begs one line; but will one line suffice? — Were you to indulge him, it certainly would not — Love is a sad encroacher, my dear. — But will it

not be necessary, cried she, to write one; were it only to tell him I can by no means allow myself to enter into a correspondence of that nature? This one may do in a civil way, without a crime — Ah! Fanny, I fear it will be no easy matter to convey that information in such language as he will think civil — Yet I really believe it is necessary to forbid his coming here again, lest he should be discovered by my father, who would not easily be persuaded it was without our knowledge and consent. — You may not perhaps be able to prevail upon a lover, so passionately devoted to your charms as he declares himself to be, to give up
his

his pursuit—But it may, at least, put him upon seeking some more eligible means of paying his addressee. The present mode I can by no means approve. Adventures of this romantic kind do mighty well in novels, but in real life they are not the thing; and should my father catch us in the fact receiving epistles in this way—Oh! heaven forbid, my dear Clara: the very thoughts of such an event chills my blood—Yes, I will write—I must—indeed I must; I will tell him the danger to which his perseverance will infallibly expose us—I will at once put an end to all his hopes—If you can, say, Fanny; but take my word for it, that will

be no easy task. A Lover's hopes increase by the difficulties they meet with; at least their desires, and that is pretty much the same thing: but go, my love, and try what you can do. I tremble as much as you do at the thoughts of what would be the consequence, were he to be seen by my father — Away she then went; and soon returned with the civil epistle. — If any thing can do it, said I, after reading it, this will. — We had no opportunity that day of conveying it; but early the next morning we went and threw it over the wall: it was so early, indeed, that we did not suppose he could be there; but our impatience to end the business would

would not let us wait, lest something might happen to prevent us having another opportunity. Having got it safely over, we went up to the summerhouse, where we could see what became of it, resolving to wait there till it was time to go in to breakfast — but we had no occasion to stay so long; the first thing we saw was his servant, galloping through the park full speed, impatient, I presume, to carry his prize to his master. How long the poor squire had been in waiting, heaven knows; but in waiting he had been we found; and I presume he was not a little delighted to find his labour had not been in vain. Where they can have

taken up their abode heaven only knows: it can be in no gentleman's feat hereabouts I presume, since he declares himself a stranger. It must then be at some farm house: and will not a man of his appearance give rise to a thousand suspicions in the neighbourhood? A figure like his cannot pass unnoticed; that is impossible. What, then, will people think? but it is little matter what, so we are but fairly quit of his visits. These, however, are only my sentiments on the subject. Poor Fanny, I fear, does not look upon the affair with quite so much indifference; nor can I wonder, admitting the account he gives of himself to be true. His
 person

person is but too engaging; and his letter the most eloquent that ever was penned; put these seducing circumstances together, Harriot; then judge what effect they may but too naturally produce in a young, artless, inexperienced heart like hers — or mine either, let me add; for a year's difference, in point of age, does not give me a title to suppose I should be better able to withstand his attractions, though I write thus wisely on the subject. Thus, Harriot, I have given you all the particulars of this wonderful event. Whether it is to end here, I know not; we are determined not to appear again in the summerhouse for some time, that he

may see she is in earnest in the request she has made of seeing him no more. I believe this piece of self denial costs the dear girl some pangs; but such are her sentiments, that I am certain she never will be guilty of any voluntary impropriety; if she errs, it must be from ignorance; for never did mortal possess a more amiable or more truly innocent heart. Yet, little as I know of the world, I am not to be told this same love has led many, no less worthy, into a thousand scrapes, but I trust my Fanny will not be added to the list. Farewell.

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND

Sir

Sir CHARLES SOMERVILLE *to*

Mr. BOLTON.

LET next post bring me your congratulations, my dear George; having happily gained the first point, which in my plan was the most difficult part of the business; all others, I flatter myself, will follow of course. She is more than an angel. Your description, rapturous as it was, fell infinitely short of the divine original. In my first epistle I could not tell you which of the lovely sisters it was who had made a conquest of my heart, not then knowing their names. All I could say was, that she surpass-

ed

fed my highest ideas of perfection ; but now, my dear George, I have it lying before me, written by the loveliest, the softest, the whitest hand, that ever nature formed ; for such, I am persuaded, is that of my divine Fanny. It is a billet she has blessed me with, in answer to mine, which I told you I had contrived to convey to her, in spite of all the impediments which stood in my way. — True, its contents are by no means flattering to my hopes ; on the contrary, the fair lines contained in it are to forbid my persevering in a pursuit, which, she tells me, must, for a thousand reasons, be absolutely fruitless ; none of which, however, the dear creature

men-

mentions. You know me too well to suppose this has damped the ardour of my passion. Difficulties I expected, nay, wished for, George. A conquest gained with ease never had charmes for me. Was it not those you prepared me to meet with which spurred me on to the enterprize? — How a fellow of your taste, George, could give such a prize to another, I am now more astonish'd at than ever. You tell me your heart was otherwise engaged: and is it possible your present mistress can equal my enchanting Fnnay? — I deny it. — You never heard the melody of her heavenly voice, did you, George? But why should I take all these pains to
 create

create myself a rival? since, were I to succeed, death would infallibly be the word. I could not possibly suffer you to exist a day in that character. I have given my charmer a hint that I am a stranger in this part of the country, lest she should be tempted to make enquiries about me; and for a time I certainly will be so, if I can prevail on the lovely creature to accompany me to some other.—A trip to Scotland, in an honourable way, must be the bait to decoy her from her enchanted castle—and really the life she now leads, by what your fair friend, Miss Harvey, told you, considered, I trust it will be sufficient to answer my purpose. 'Twas with
her,

her, I think, you told me you saw those lovely sisters;—for they are lovely, George, beyond description, I confess:—but I am not so-unconscionable as to sigh for both. I need hardly tell you, when my charmer is once in my power, I shall take another road. Of matrimony I have already had my fill—thanks to my modern wife, she too was of the same opinion, and kindly left me to enjoy that felicity with another which she fancied it was not in my power to bestow. Joy go with the happy pair. My worst wish is, that I may never more set eyes on either. Had she thought fit to behave with a little more discretion, we might have

have dragged on, perhaps, through life, like a great many others, decently enough, not caring a straw for each other, I grant; yet not coming to this fashionable extremity; but faith I believe it is better as it is; we are both now at liberty to follow our own devices. She has left me no incumbrance, no children I mean: so I am happily restored to my primitive state of batchelorism to all intents and purposes, at least, to every purpose I shall ever wish for. Had a divorce taken place, you may well believe I am in no humour to try a second time the sweets of matrimony. The women of this age are formed, by every possible care in
their

their education, for the most delightful mistresses on the face of the earth.

— But for wives — cast your eyes around ; examine those who figure in the *beau monde* — Need I add more, George, on the subject ? —

Perhaps the stile of life in which my Fanny has lived may have given her more domestic ideas of happiness than our town-bred belles can possibly acquire. This, however, I rather fear than wish, as my affairs are circumstanced ; since they can be of no service either to herself or me. —

True, she may turn out the more pleasing companion ; for even in a mistress I cannot dispense with a delicacy of sentiment, a feminine gen-

tleness

tleness of manners, and a thousand
 other perfections, which it is in vain
 to seek for in any class within a hun-
 dred miles of London : — but here,
 George, I flatter myself I have found
 the phoenix I have long wished to
 find; and can I but obtain her on
 my own terms, they shall be such as
 shall leave her no reason to complain.
 My fortune is ample, my principles
 better than the general run of young
 fellows : my venturing on matrimo-
 ny is an incontestible proof of it.
 Nay, I am more than half persuaded
 nature intended me for an excellent
 husband, had I met with a tolerable
 wife ; but I am now, by dear-bought
 experience, convinced, a man may,
with

with equal hopes of success, expect to find the philosopher's stone. My only business now is, to improve the correspondence thus happily begun. — This, it is true, she positively forbids; but will she have the worse opinion of a lover for disobeying a command of that nature?

Yours, &c.

CHARLES SOMERVILLE.

CLARA

CLARA to HARRIOT.

HAD we any man to deal with except our identical obstinate father, I should certainly be tempted to laugh heartily at what I am going to tell you; but as that is not the case, the affair is past a joke, and I am more inclined to cry — not that it concerns myself: I wish it did; as I think the spirit which nature has endowed me with would enable me to extricate myself from it with less difficulty than my poor Fanny can do with her gentleness and timidity. But not to keep you longer in suspense, know that the dear, and now

terrified, girl has had an offer of marriage. — Do not mistake me, Harriot, I do not mean from her adventurous knight; alas! I fear its coming from him would have excited very different emotions. — You have seen a Mr. Osburn here, I believe — he is some years older than my father I am positive, though he has the advantage of a more florid complexion, which might lead one to doubt it. They have for some time been in treaty about the purchase of some lands belonging to the former, which unfortunately lie so contiguous to the estate of the latter, that his heart is set on uniting them together. Heaven only knows how
the

the idea I am going to mention could possibly enter their old heads; but certain it is, in the course of their transactions, poor Fanny has been offered, or demanded, I know not which, as part of the purchase money — do you comprehend me? I had frequently observed the old dotard gazing at her when occasionally here. — She has sung to him, played to him, and from the natural sweetness of her temper, shewn him every attention due to him, not only as our father's particular friend, but as one whose age and infirmities, (for observe, Harriot, he is a martyr to the gout) entitled him to them. These attentions, to which, I presume,

he

he had been but little accustomed to meet with from others, for few possess a heart like that of my Fanny, has, it seems made such an impression on the silly old soul, that nothing will serve him but buying her of my father — buying her, I say; for, covetous as our said father is, I cannot think he could have been tempted to promise him such a present for nothing: be that as it will, they have actually agreed on the matter between them. The lands in question are to be transferred into our family, and Fanny into that of the Osburns: what else goes to complete the bargain I have not heard, nor do I care a straw. Had this

transaction happened before our summer-house adventure, the old soul might perhaps have had a fairer chance; though even then I think the odds were considerably against him, rich as he is: but now, I need hardly add, he may as well expect to marry his grandmother, who, upon a moderate computation, must have been in her grave a hundred years ago: thus, my dear, is my prophecy fulfilled. Did I not formerly tell you these are the only kind of lovers we had any chance to captivate? He is a starched, old batchelor; and though, by all accounts, a harmless kind of animal, yet certainly not endowed with any great

share of understanding; since he is ignorant enough to suppose a possibility of a girl like her being happy with such a companion as him for life. — Heavens! my dear, what an idea! — but perhaps I wrong him; he may expect no such matter; it is his own happiness he has, no doubt, in view; hers must be left wholly out of the question. Is he then the harmless, good kind of man the world think proper to declare him? — But what avails these fruitless reflections? Let me rather proceed to tell you how this matter was made known to us. Yesterday, after the cloth was removed, my father, with a look that spoke him in

high good humour, said, " Well!
 " girls, you have long been grum-
 " bling at the solitary life you are
 " pleased to say I compel you to
 " lead; I am now going to convince
 " you I am not so indifferent in re-
 " gard to your real happiness as you
 " have, I presume, impertinently
 " imagined." At this I began to
 look wondrous sharp; amazed, and
 impatient to know what delightful
 news was to follow so civil a preface.
 " Clara," cried he, observing me
 in the fidgets, " you may compose
 " yourself; I see plainly your too
 " lively imagination has far outrun
 " the mark already. At present
 " what I have to say concerns only
 " your

“ your sister; though if you will
 “ endeavour for the future to behave
 “ with as much meekness, and be as
 “ tractable as I have hitherto found
 “ her, I may in a short time per-
 “ haps be able to do as much for you
 “ as I have done for her.” — This,
 Harriot, was rather a damper; but
 my curiosity to know what the
 mighty matter could possibly be was
 so violent, I could scarcely breathe.
 To give him an answer was out of
 my power; and poor Fanny looked
 very much like one who knew not
 whether to laugh or cry. — “ Well,
 “ pray, Brother,” cried my aunt,
 who sat poring on her everlasting
 knitting through her spectacles, —

“ keep us no longer in suspense;
 “ you have excited even my curio-
 “ sity; no wonder Clara’s is up in
 “ arms.” — “ None in the least,”
 replied he; “ her passions are ever
 “ ready at a moment’s call.” —
 Thank you, good Sir, I had very
 nearly said, for your compliment. —
 “ Well! Fanny, what think you of
 “ a rich husband who will whisk
 “ you away from your present state
 “ of bondage in a coach and six?” —
 Fanny blushed scarlet deep; I stared
 at him with eyes stretched to the ut-
 most; and honest madam Deborah
 very composedly took off her specta-
 cles and laying them with her work
 on her knee, stretched not only her
 eyes

eyes but mouth also to their full extent, eager to hear more of this interesting and animating subject. — We were all struck dumb—"What! "not a word, Fanny? I say, what "think you of such a husband as I "have described?" — "Not yet," cried I, "my dear Sir. We have "heard nothing of him, unless you "reckon riches and a coach and fix "a description of a husband; which, "by the bye, are too often the best "part of them." — "Still saucy and "impertinent as ever, Clara, I see," said his worship. "Yet I question "if you would be wise enough to "think so, were it come to the point. "I can give a pretty good guess at

“ your sentiments by the flippancy
 “ of your tongue ; but Fanny, I
 “ trust, has more sense—What say
 “ you, child ? turning to her.” —

“ Oh ! my dear sir,” cried she, now
 pale as death with apprehension,

“ indeed I know not what to say ;

“ I have never once had a thought

“ on the subject — I wish not to

“ marry—I—I really—that is, I” —

“ Fib,” replied he : “ for I’ll take

“ upon me to say you have both

“ thought and talked of matrimony

“ more frequently than you chuse to

“ confess, or you are not a female ;

“ but whether or not, I now, not

“ only give you leave to do it, but

“ command it. The person I have

“ made

“ made choice of, and who has done
 “ you the honour to make choice of
 “ you, is your friend, Mr. Osburn.”

— Mr. Osburn! we all exclaimed in
 a breath — “ Aye,” cried he, feign-
 ing to suppose, for I deny he could
 believe it, our emotions were the ef-
 fect of joy, “ the very same; and
 “ well may you be astonished at
 “ such unlooked-for good fortune.”

— By this time the poor terrified
 Fanny had fallen back in her chair in
 a swoon. This rather startled him;
 but he still thought proper to impute
 what had happened merely to her
 surprize at hearing such flattering
 intelligence. My aunt and I led her
 into the air; and by that, and a few

drops of hartshorn, the dear creature soon recovered. We could not prevail upon her to go back to my father, nor did he insist upon it, judging perhaps he had said enough for the present. The emphasis he had laid on the word command, he, no doubt, believed had made a suitable impression, knowing, as we both did to our cost, the inflexibility of his temper. — I accompanied her to her room: what we did there, Harriot, you may easily guess: we shed tears; we talked over the horrid proposal; then wept again; nor was the elegant stranger forgot. — She owned to me, when my father first talked of a husband, a faint hope darted through

through her mind that her lover had perhaps found means to make proposals to him, and that he was the person. — Judge then what her feelings were when convinced of her mistake; but I have already told you the effect they produced. When we were called down to tea, she begged I would make her excuse for not accompanying her. She could not appear before the servants, had there been no other reason. Her eyes were swelled with crying — mine indeed were little better; but there was no help for it. We could not both absent ourselves, having tenderly embraced the dear creature, and begged her to compose herself, down I went. — “ I doubt

“ not,” said my father, as I entered,
 “ you have been giving your sister
 “ some good advice; but observe
 “ me, Clara; if I find you presume
 “ to instil into her any of your
 “ flighty notions, I shall take care
 “ to keep you separate.”——I know
 not exactly, replied I, Sir, what
 you mean by flighty, nor did I
 think it necessary to instil any no-
 tions at all. — She may not perhaps
 approve the match you have propos-
 ed for her; but in that case I pre-
 sume there will be no compulsion in
 the matter: I therefore saw no cause
 for her being so much alarmed.——
 This, Harriot, I said by way of
 sounding him; for, in fact, I believe
 no

no such thing.—“ You are very apt
 “ to presume, Clara,” replied he;
 “ but at present it is of little conse-
 “ quence; your opinion will not be
 “ asked; it will be time enough
 “ when your turn comes, to pre-
 “ sume how I may think proper to
 “ act. Should Fanny, however,
 “ which is natural enough, ask you,
 “ on your return to her, what has
 “ passed between us since you left
 “ her, you may tell her, from me.
 “ I expect Mr. Osburn here in a
 “ week or ten days, to claim my
 “ promise, and that she will be
 “ ready, with a grateful heart, to
 “ receive him, as the man I have
 “ destined for her husband. I would
 “ hope

“ hope the compulsion you was
 “ pleased to mention will be unne-
 “ cessary ; but if it should prove
 “ otherwise, I know the prerogative
 “ of a Father, and also how to
 “ make myself obeyed.” — Thus,
 Harriot, ended our agreeable con-
 ference. My aunt said not a word.
 She, I fancy, had had her say before
 I joined them. I know not yet
 what side of the important question
 she takes; but rather imagine she will
 incline to that of matrimony; never
 having yet tried it, and of course
 must have a tendency that way. —
 Heaven only knows how the matter
 will end; but I shrewdly suspect it
 will not be as my father expects.

Should

Should the charming stranger persevere in his pursuit, I think I may pronounce Mr. Osburn will not get a wife from our family, unless he will kindly take aunt Deborah in that character; and you must confess it would be the wiser plan of the two.

Farewell,

CLARA FAULKLAND,

The

The same to the same.

HARRIOT, I am alarmed, terrified; this affair, which we at first looked upon merely as the amusement of an hour, grows now too serious for my peace. I actually tremble for my Fanny. She trembles for herself; yet, alas! I fear she will not have courage to put an end to a correspondence, from which, it is but too plain, she receives more pleasure than I could wish. Heavens! should my father discover it, we are undone. What would become of us! I dare not think of it; yet it is never out of my mind. At

some

some moments I am tempted to tell him all, as the only means perhaps of saving my sister from a step I cannot reflect on without terror: but on my barely mentioning such a design she implored me to spare her a mortification which I could not but know must be attended with dreadful consequences. Depend on my discretion, cried the dear girl. Have I not my loved Clara for an adviser? Do I conceal any thing from her? indeed, indeed I do not. I never will; nor shall she ever have cause to blame my conduct. — But my father — Ah he will never pardon what has already past. — For pity's sake subject me not to his displeasure: I cannot,

cannot, cannot stand it, continued she, throwing her arms round my neck, and sobbing as if her heart would break. — This odious Osburn too! — Oh! Clara, my dear Clara, promise to keep this affair a secret, or I know not what my terrors may tempt me to. — You see what this engaging man says for himself — Is there a single line, a single expression, in any one of his letters which can justly alarm my delicacy. [I should have told you, Harriot, he has found means to convey them, without having recourse to his first contrivance: I will tell you what it is by and by.] Has he left me in any doubts of his honourable intentions?

tions? You see what he proposes. — True, I am far, very far, my dear Clara, at this moment, from meaning to take such a step; nor shall I ever have courage for it, I am persuaded, unless driven to extremity; which heaven forbid: but, indeed, indeed if that should happen

She could add no more; her tears stopped her utterance. — The step she talked of is a trip to Scotland, which Sir Charles, (for we are no longer ignorant of his rank and fortune) ventured to propose in his last letter, in consequence of her writing to assure him he could have nothing to hope, as her hand was promised to another by her father, and that she
was

was determined to obey his commands, however contrary to her inclinations, rather than incur his displeasure by an act of disobedience.— This she vainly hoped would have put an end to the affair at once ; but is it not rather more probable, Harriot, the information she has given him will increase his hopes ? Will he not naturally believe she will put herself under the protection of a man, who I fear he flatters himself, is no longer indifferent to her, than give her hand to one for whom, by the stile in which she mentioned him, she has conceived an aversion ?—and this is really the case, my dear. — While he was merely my father's friend,

friend, and a visitor in the family, she pitied his infirmities, and, as I before said, was, from the goodness of her heart, more than barely civil to him; but now, finding he has formed such ridiculous views, she cannot bear to hear him mentioned — and no wonder. — But now let me tell you by what means he has contrived to carry on this clandestine correspondence, which I can neither approve nor have courage to prevent. Our gardener some time ago parted with one of his helpers, and enquiring in the neighbourhood of course for another, Sir Charles, by chance, heard of it. A thought instantly struck him: he ordered his man to strip

strip off his livery and offer himself for this employment. how he is qualified I know not; but to make short of my story, he was actually hired; and now works in our garden unsuspected. This at once rendered the matter but too easy; nor does his master fail to avail himself of his assistance; and sorry am I to add, poor Fanny has, by insensible degrees, been drawn in to answer his letters but too regularly. What can one say to it? Hitherto nothing has passed one can justly censure, except my father's ignorance of it: but can this circumstance be justified; alas! alas! I fear it cannot! no doubt he will next fall on some scheme to procure

an interview; his genius seems to be but too fruitful in invention; and if his letters only have made so deep an impression on her heart as I have reason to fear they have, can we hope a more intimate acquaintance will efface it? — But for the terror the thoughts of this Osburn's proposal has raised, she might ere now perhaps have conquered this ill-fated partiality: at least I am certain she would never have listened to that of the engaging Sir Charles. — I am perpetually condemning myself for the part I have acted in this affair, yet know not how to remedy what I have done amiss. There is but one way, and that I really have not courage

rage for. I dare not meet the storm
 we must expect to encounter from
 my father, were I now to tell him
 all: nay, I am persuaded it would
 be the readiest method I could possi-
 bly take to gain the point Sir Charles
 ardently wishes: she would certainly
 go off with him rather than meet his
 rage. To talk of his applying for
 his consent would be madness — his
 promise is given — Sir Charles has
 no land to sell to tempt him — the
 projected marriage is a mere affair of
 'conveniency — 'tis a bargain — and
 as he thinks it a good one, no power
 on earth, I am well assured, can
 make him recede from it. Nay as a
 punishment for the fault we have
 unfor-

unfortunately been guilty of, he would be more set upon it than ever. All these circumstances considered, makes me as anxiously wish to know something more of her lover as she can do. — Should he clearly prove himself in every particular worthy of her, what would you advise, Harriot? — I never can approve of an elopement — yet situated as she is, will it not, in some measure, be excusable? There wants not examples in abundance, if examples could justify a step of that nature — 'tis what happens every day; nor are we to suppose every match thus made proves unhappy. — You see I would gladly endeavour to reconcile myself

to the thoughts of what I fear is but too likely to take place——A short time will now, it is probable, decide her fate.—Should my father attempt to force her inclinations, he will have only himself to blame for the consequence of his severity.—Farewell; I am quite exhausted with writing and my painful reflections.

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND,

Sin

Sir CHARLES to Mr. BOLTON.

WOULD you believe it, George, I find so much innocence, so many truly angelic perfections in this dear girl, that were I not already fettered, I should certainly be strongly tempted to play the fool a second time, and marry her. Her person you have seen; it is infinitely lovely: but who can do justice to the charms of her mind? I am absolutely at some moments half determined to give up my scheme, though all my hopes of happiness depend upon its success, rather than purchase it at the expence of

deceiving the most artless, the most engaging of her sex; but am no sooner again in her dear presence, than all my scruples vanish, and my whole soul is filled with ecstasy unutterable at the delightful thought that she will one day be mine — that day, I trust, will not be a very distant one; my angel listens to my suit with a sweetness which, though checked by a thousand tender, delicate fears for a father's indignation, bids me not despair. I told you in my last, that, disguised in my man's cloaths, I had been introduced to the presence of my charmer; ever accompanied, however, by her fearless lovely sister; nay, in fact, I am

by no means clear that Clara is not the most perfectly beautiful of the two; but there is in my Fanny's manner, a softness, a gentleness; in short, an undiscrible something, which I yet most sensibly feel. The bewitching Clara's attractions are quite of a different cast; she is lively, spirited, animated, and has a pair of eyes so very penetrating, that, upon my soul, I dare hardly meet their glances, lest they should see farther into me than I wish. A consciousness that all is not as it ought to be, makes me dread them, George; yet, with all this, she is amiable beyond expression; has more ready wit than any female ought to be trusted

with, who has not an equal share of sense and good nature. She doats upon my gentle Fanny; every word she utters plainly proves it; and I believe the penetrating glances I mentioned are all on her sister's account. She has too good an understanding to be wholly void of suspicion. Our acquaintance is but short. She is no less anxious, I am persuaded, for her Fanny's happiness than her own. Can one wonder, then, she should endeavour to read my very soul? Dear, lovely girl! Why, why am I so circumstanced, that I am compelled to deceive you? All I fear is her influence with my beloved, should she

happen

happen to less partial to me than is necessary for my purpose. Were she left to herself, I am persuaded she would fly with me to the farthest corner of the earth, rather than accept the hand of this dreaded Osburn, for so I find my superannuated rival is called; true, did she doubt my honor, I am no less persuaded that no power on earth could move her; for she is virtuous as fair, and fair as virtuous: but of that I have taken such effectual care, that even the clear-sighted Clara has hitherto shewn no symptoms of suspicion. The only obstacle I have to surmount, is the impropriety of a clandestine marriage: but, as I said be-

fore, I do not despair. Will you not call me a soft-hearted puppy; George, when I tell you, I believe it will be as easy to conquer the scruples of my beloved as my own. I am no professed libertine; I abhor the character: can I, then, look forward to the *denouement* of my plot without some unpleasant feelings? I confess, that part of the business is a very considerable damp to my joy; he must be a wretch, indeed, who can: but since marry I cannot, however well inclined, shall I merit that cursed epithet? — George, a thought has this instant struck me — Let me reflect a moment before I venture to inform you what it is —

Yes,

Yes, by heavens, I will marry her —
 You start — you conclude my brain
 is cracked — not at all — I well know
 I shall be, if possible, more guilty
 than by following my design — but
 shall I not by doing so spare my
 gentle Fanny those pangs she must
 otherwise suffer? — I am relieved
 — my heart seems eased of an op-
 pressive load — while I have life, I
 will cherish her as my soul's dearest
 treasure. She may never discover
 that she is not lawfully mine — Ah!
 forbid it, heaven! Then should I be
 looked upon by her as a wretch, in-
 deed, though what I propose is
 wholly with a design to render her
 happy — Do, George, if possible,

tell me you approve this very wild
 plan — I know it is such, therefore
 you need not take the trouble to
 point it out to me — if you condemn
 it, spare your reflections — After all,
 why am I not at liberty to become a
 convert to Thelyphora? and the
 matter is settled in a trice. I have
 not time, at present, to study its ar-
 guments: but many a man has taken
 up his religion on trust; in this in-
 stance, George, I will follow the
 example: so voluminous a work
 must contain many in favour of my
 scheme. Grant that some years
 hence, for I would gladly hope it
 will not be sooner, she should, by
 some unfortunate accident, make the
 total

total discovery; by that time I hope
 I shall have so fully proved my
 worth in every other particular, the
 fervor, the tenderness of my affec-
 tion, that she will think I rather
 merit pity than blame, and gene-
 rously pardon my only crime.—

Perhaps this last page of my letter
 would not stand the test of very se-
 vere criticism, George; yet what I
 have said has certainly some weight.

— Farewel! I fly to the darling of
 my soul, and think I shall meet her
 gentle smiles with more than usual
 pleasure; conscious I shall not do
 her so great an injury as, till now,
 I fancied myself compelled to do —
 Once more, farewel! — I hope your

goodness will acquit me of all intentional guilt, if you possibly can.—

Yours ever,

C. SOMERVILLE.

gentle smiles with more than usual pleasure; conscious I shall not do great an injury as, till now, I fancied myself compelled to do —

CLARA

Once more, farewell! — I hope your

Good- E 6

CLARA to HARRIOT.

HARRIOT, the crisis of my loved Fanny's fate draws near; a very few days must decide the interesting question, whether, by obeying a father's cruel commands, she is to sacrifice every possible prospect of felicity, or, by following the dictates of her heart, as far as human foresight can see, insure it with the most amiable of men. This is the point, and a most important point it is, you'll allow. Sir Charles is, even in my opinion, one of the most engaging men I can form an idea of; poor Fanny is, you may believe, no less

partial

partial in his favour. Surely, surely, she cannot but be happy with him! How unfortunate is her situation, my dear Harriot! Nothing wanting to complete her felicity but a father's approbation; yet no possible hope of obtaining it, though it is most certain he could give no reasonable cause for refusing it. If Sir Charles is the man we have no reason in the world to doubt but he is, where could she make a better choice? — Yesterday my father sent for the dear trembling girl — I was already with him — on her entering, he took a letter from his pocket — by the bye, I should tell you he has studiously avoided mentioning the

dis-

distressing subject ever since he saw the effect it had on her the first time, well knowing, I presume, all he could say would not be able to reconcile her to his plan; and he is not of a disposition to listen to her objection with patience. — “Well, Fanny, (said he) on Wednesday next Mr. Osburn tells me in this letter, he proposes you the honour of a visit, and, as I have settled every necessary preliminary with him, I will not doubt your ready compliance. I have allowed you sufficient time for reflection; and as I know you are a good girl, and a girl of sense, I am persuaded you see the infinite advantages which must result from so noble

ble a match. Could I find one equally desirable for your pert sister, I think the world, at least, whatever her giddy head might do, would do me the justice to confess, I had not been careless of your happiness. — A thousand thanks, replied I, my dear Sir, for your kind solicitude in regard to me. I have a proper sense of it, I do assure you: but must take the liberty to say, I should like mightily to have a vote in the matter myself. — He gave me such a look, Harriot! — I make no doubt of it, replied he; I know your rebellious spirit, girl: but let me have none of those doctrines preached in my presence, I desire. — Poor Fanny

old

was

was ready to sink into the earth; there she sat, pale as death, her salts incessantly applied to her nose; all this he could not but see, yet he affected to take no notice of it. An embarrassing silence must now have ensued had not my aunt Deborah popped in her word, "I dare say, brother, (said the plump spinster) Fanny will receive Mr. Osburn in a becoming manner; she was always kind and attentive to him; and though he does come on Wednesday, she need not fear being hurried." — "Pray what do you call being hurried?" (cried my father) "can one be in too much haste to be happy? My friend is infirm; he may be carried off

off suddenly ; such a match may not offer again ; they are not to be expected every day, let me tell you : — remember, procrastination is the thief of time — a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush — she that will not when she may, when she will she shall have nay" — There is another very pertinent proverb, Sir, said I, which has escaped your memory, Marry in haste, and repent at leisure. — Harriot, I could not for for my life help it, it was so pat to the purpose ; rather impertinent, or so, to be sure : but that circumstance he had given me good reason to believe would not very much surprise him — I vow, I thought he would have

have beat me—"March to your apartment, (cried he, in no very melodious tone of voice) go, girl; go, I want not your advice, nor is my Fanny so blind to her own interest, as to thank you for it"—my Fanny, Harriot!—it was his own dear interest that gave birth to that dash of tenderness—I had very near hinted as much in a civil way: but as I knew it would answer no good purpose, I even, with a stately air, sailed out of the room; the poor terrified victim, as if by instinct, held out her arms, in order to detain me. I cannot tell you all that passed during my banishment— suffice it to say, the dear girl was peremptorily ordered to prepare

pare herself for being fettered the
 Monday after her lover's arrival,
 which is, my dear, exactly this day
 se'nnight; and by that time, in all
 human probability, she will be mar-
 ried, Harriot; for I am certain this
 hasty resolution will determine her
 motions — nay, what can she do?
 What would you, or any mortal, do
 in a similar situation? As to myself,
 knowing, as I now do, the truly
 amiable Sir Charles, hesitation would
 be out of the question. I have not
 said this to her, I give you my ho-
 nor — I dare not — were I certain,
 indeed, she would be happy with him
 as I could wish, and as she deserves
 to be, not a scruple would torment
 me;

me: but that is impossible; marriage, at the very best, is a lottery, in which there is an unconscionable number of blanks to a prize; this all the world declare, particularly those, I believe, who have tried it — but for all that, one would not voluntarily take a blank when a prize seems to be in one's offer. — And what is this Osburn? A blank, surely, to all intents and purposes. — Don't you think, my dear, I had better go and read this epistle to my father before I dispatch it? He would certainly be delighted to find me capable of such solid reasoning. — Adieu! I have chatted too long already with you. It is high time I should go
and

and comfort my poor sister. — Next Monday — something tells me, she will ere that be many miles removed from your

CLARA FAULKLAND,

The same to the same.

HARRIOT, she is gone—actually gone—Oh! may all that happiness attend the dear, dear girl, she so highly merits, and of which she scarce had a doubt!—The poor hobbling Osburn arrived, not on Wednesday, as was expected, but late on Tuesday evening, willing, I suppose, to give her this proof of his impatience; it was, however, so late, that we had both retired to our apartments for the night, and happily were not summoned to attend him: indeed, we had made a pretence for going an hour sooner than usual, having

having much to do; for, as I fore-
 saw, Fanny had taken her resolution,
 and with her adoring lover set off by
 four o'clock next morning, he having
 provided every thing necessary for
 the journey. — I will say nothing,
 Harriot, of our adieus — I should
 certainly have expired, but for the
 comforting hope that she was gone
 to enjoy perfect felicity, as perfect,
 at least, as this vile world can be-
 stow — Is it not a vile world in
 which parents, without remonstrance,
 would thus for sordid interest sacri-
 fice their children's happiness? Yes,
 it is detestable, and most cordially do
 I hate it at this moment. — Well,
 my dear, can you form an idea of
 grieved

E the

the glorious fracas which happened when the breakfast bell rung next morning — impossible — utterly impossible — no Fanny to be found. — I determined to pretend ignorance, at least, as long as I could, that I might do all in my power to prevent a pursuit, in case such a thing were proposed; since, had the dear fugitive been overtaken, what had she to expect but instant misery? Whether they really believed me so, heaven knows; but finding they could not compel me to confess the contrary, every corner was searched; the servants dispatched, some here, some there; poor Deborah — but there is no describing the bustle she,

honest soul! was in — even the canal occurred to their guilty consciences.

As for the gouty, tottering Osburn, I could almost have found in my heart to pity him; for my father had given him every reason to believe his proposals would meet with a gracious reception, therefore he was not to blame, except for his doting folly, which is entirely his own affair. — In short, finding she was actually gone, though where, they could not guess, my father's rage became unbounded; he stormed, he raved, and, looking with suspicious eyes on your poor friend Clara, who, for once in her life, at least, behaved with all the meekness of a lamb, he very piously

curled

curfed the whole fex; adding, the beft of them were born to be plagues to all mankind; then poured out ten thoufand wifhes — not for her happinefs, Harriot; Oh, no! — but that ſhe might ftarve; that ſhe might meet with every curfe in the power of heaven to inflict — my blood abſolutely runs cold when I think of his horrid expreffions; 'twas ſhocking. Having quite exhausted himſelf with theſe horrid imprecations, he caſt himſelf back in his chair, unable to utter another ſyllable; his companion in aſtoniſhment and diſappointment now ſeemed to forget his own mortification, and took all imaginable pains to ſooth him —

This again roused him to madness; he said, she was a wretch unworthy such a friend; blamed him for not joining in his just rage, and again swore he hoped to see her expire for want of a morsel of bread. Thus passed the morning of that — alas! I know not what epithet to give it — gladly would I call it happy — and I will call it so, Harriot; for is not Sir Charles, as I have repeatedly said, the most amiable of men? —

The disappointed lover, after staying a day or two, in order to recover from the fatigue of his journey, took his leave. How the affair of the lands were settled, I know not; nor whether he made proposals, as I wished,

wished, to aunt Deborah, finding no better might be, though I fear not, as she, good soul, would, of course, have jumped at the offer, I'll answer for her; and, to say truth, it would have been the best jump she ever made in her life, were she ten times more nimble than she is. My father, I can plainly see, has his suspicions still, in regard to my knowledge of the business: but, I believe, he has made a resolution never even to mention the dear girl any more, for, from the hour his old friend left us, he has been dumb on the subject. My aunt has endeavoured to coax the secret out of me repeatedly: but, as it can answer no good pur-

pose to trust her with it, I have, without much trouble, evaded all her arts, and that, too, without telling downright fibs ; a little equivocation, or so, is pardonable I hope : it is more than probable she suspects me ; but bare suspicion is no proof.—

You will naturally enough wonder I have not been forbid the use of pen, ink, and paper, lest I should correspond with the dear runaway ; this precaution, however, has been forgot in our hurry : but we did not forget to guard against so probable an event — You remember Sir Charles's man, who was transformed into one of our assistant gardeners ; he is left in the same employment ; in which, it seems,

he

he does mighty well, for the purpose of taking charge of our letters. This thought was the invention of his master; it happily occurred to him while Fanny and I were expressing our fears on the subject; indeed, had honest Frank left his place at the very time she went off, it might have created suspicions in regard to him no way favourable to my loved sister, as he is, I can tell you, a handsome young fellow; this would have been a shocking circumstance, and made a fine story in the country; at present, they have only the comfort of forming what conjectures they please, and thousands will be formed no doubt — for my part, I

care not how soon the truth were known, as that can certainly bring no disgrace upon her — a little blame, perhaps, from those who are ignorant of the situation she was reduced to; but that would soon be forgot when they find she has made a choice so much more eligible, in every respect, than that made for her. — She has now been gone a fortnight; of course, I am every moment expecting the wished-for happiness of hearing from her; till then, my mind, you may well believe, cannot be perfectly at ease — impossible; for, ah, Harriot! think what a mind delicate as her's must have suffered during so long a journey — a journey,

journey, too, for such a purpose; no friend, no companion of her own sex — Heavens! my dear, the very thoughts of it even make me tremble; what, then, must the dear timid Fanny have done, who has not half my spirits to support her through it? — But I will think no more of it; many, many, perhaps, no less gentle and delicately apprehensive than herself have gone the same road before her; and that, too, voluntarily, which we cannot, strictly speaking, say she did — Alas! Was she not in a manner compelled to act as she has done? — Let those who compelled her, then, bear the blame, if it deserves to be blamed, which, lov-

ing her as I do, I am very unwilling
to grant. — Adieu, my dear Har-
riot !

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

FANNY

FANNY to CLARA.

IF a certainty that your Fanny is united to the most amiable of men can set your affectionate heart at rest, my Clara, let every anxious care on her account be instantly banished from it; be assured I am as perfectly happy as mortal can be who has purchased that happiness at the expence of a father's displeasure; this displeasure, my sister, sits heavy on my heart: were I but permitted to throw myself at his feet, and to be once more restored to his favour, my every wish would be gratified, except being blessed with your dear

believe

F 6

com-

company, and that I should not then despair of obtaining. — Alas, my love! I am impatient to hear, yet almost tremble to ask the particulars that happened after I left you — I fear, ah! much, much I fear my father's wrath would fall heavy on my kind Clara; soften that part of the sad story as much as you can — Oh, spare me the pangs it would give me to hear you had been cruelly treated. I have important reasons, my dear, for wishing to know if you have acquainted him with the name and family of my engaging Sir Charles: what they are, you shall be informed in the course of my letter. — Circumstanced as I am, you may well believe

believe it was no mortification to me to find he wished we should pass some months in the country ; so far from it, when he proposed kindly giving me his reasons for making the request, I was quite delighted. — Alas, my love ! happy as I am, I cannot forget that I have forfeited that place I once held in my father's affection. Would it not, then, have appeared like adding contempt to disobedience, had I at once launched into the gay world ? Too sure it would ; and, heaven knows, I would die rather than give him just cause to think me capable of it. Was it not fortunate, then, my dear, that this plan was proposed ; and that, too,

by

by himself? — I am going to give you the reasons he mentioned; from you I need not conceal them; even Sir Charles would have no objection, I am certain, for he knows you are the friend of my heart, and, as such, loves and esteems you most truly. — You know both his parents have been dead several years; of course, he was at liberty to please himself in the choice of a wife: but he has an uncle, it seems, from whom he has very considerable expectations; nay, a promise of succeeding to his estate, on condition he is wholly governed by him in that important article; this, Clara, I need not add, he has not been: he wishes, therefore, to keep

keep our marriage for a while a secret, till he can, in some favourable moment, acquaint him with it — his own, by what I can find, is a very large one ; far, far more so than would satisfy my highest ambition : but it is not for me, Clara, to set bounds to his — I brought no fortune — alas ! I dare not flatter myself he will ever receive any from my family ; and who, noble and generous as I now find him, a day may come, when, were I to object to the concealment he proposes, he might upbraid me for preventing his being made heir to the estate he expects from this relation. — I hope, my love, you will at once see the propriety

priety of my acquiescence, and, of course, the necessity there is for our living extremely retired. This circumstance, as I said before, gives me infinite pleasure: but, alas! it pains me to add, it is no less necessary to conceal the name of my amiable husband from my father — this, this, Clara, pierces me to the soul, since it puts it out of my power to make those submissions my heart is anxious to make, in hopes to obtain his forgiveness — fruitless they might, perhaps — alas! I may more justly say, too probably be; yet my duty, my affection, a thousand tender considerations, renders me anxious to do all I can towards so desirable a blessing:

but

But I am compelled to give up every hope of that nature for a time; since, were I now to do it, it is natural to believe my father would make such enquiries concerning Sir Charles, merely to gratify his own curiosity, perhaps, for I dare not flatter myself he any longer concerns himself about his Fanny's fate, as might discover what he so earnestly wishes to conceal; at least, this was the objection he made when I proposed writing to him — and what, my love, could I reply? 'Tis certainly possible that what he apprehends might follow — Again I repeat, I hope you see the necessity I am under to comply with his kindly-urged request; true, it

was

was but a request; yet could I refuse to gratify him, Clara? Whatever reluctance I felt to oblige him in not writing, I could not; and you, my love, I hope will tell me I did right.

Sir Charles's first design was to go immediately to his seat in Yorkshire: but that design, on reflection, appeared to me rather hazardous, as he must have many acquaintances there, whose politeness would, of course, induce them to pay their respects on his arrival, in which case his secret could not fail to transpire. We mutually agreed to give up that scheme; nor had we fixed on any other, when by a change in our road, from the north,

north, we met with the delightful spot from whence I now write — a more charming place it is not easy to conceive; it belongs to a gentleman who is, with his family, gone to spend some years abroad — they had but just left it; of course, we found every thing in the most perfect order. The house is large, and elegantly furnished in the modern stile; the gardens, extensive, and laid out with taste. We found, to my no small satisfaction, almost every kind of musical instruments; and, to crown all, a well-filled library, whether well chosen I dare not take upon me to say, nor have I been long enough here to judge, granting I were capable

ble of it. I should also tell you, they had left a man and maid servant to take care of the house, besides the gardener and his wife, who have a sweet little cottage within less than a quarter of a mile of it — luckily for us, it was not to be let to any family who objected to their continuing in it — you may be sure we made none: on the contrary, it was the most fortunate thing imaginable, as we should have been a good deal at a loss till we could provide ourselves — they have rendered that matter perfectly easy, for, by their assistance, we have hired several others, besides two of Sir Charles's own men, whom he had wrote to, for the purpose of meeting

meeting him on the road, and on whose fidelity, I presume, he can depend. Pray tell me how honest Frank goes on; he, I trust, will also continue to merit the confidence we have reposed in him. — Thus, my Clara, have I given you a tolerable idea, I hope, of your Fanny's situation — and let me add — my amiable, my engaging Sir Charles, by his unremitting kindness and attention, puts it out of my power to repent the step I have taken; yet there are moments, I will confess, when I am almost tempted to wish I had run every hazard rather than thus have forfeited my dear father's affection: but those, Clara, are the moments when

Sir

Sir Charles is absent from me. In his dear presence I forget every thing except my desire to render myself more and more worthy his tenderness and love. At all times, however, my Clara has a place in my remembrance; nor need she fear losing it by absence, or any other event in life. Adieu, my tenderly-beloved sister! — Sir Charles kisses your fair hand — and I am ever your

FANNY S——.

CLARA

CLARA to HARRIOT.

READ the inclosed, Harriot, and rejoice with me, that I have heard at last from my beloved Fanny — I trust she is happy; nay, she assures me she is, my dear; yet you will find a tender strain of melancholy runs through her whole letter, which the amiable creature herself is not, perhaps, conscious of, but which cannot escape the penetrating eyes of her Clara. Gladly would I flatter myself it proceeds from no other cause than her being separated from her family — Surely, surely, there can be no other — Ah, heaven for-

bid! — and if so, let us hope that will in a short time be removed — my father cannot, one would think, continue inexorable when she is at liberty to tell him Sir Charles is in every respect so unexceptionable a match — when she is at liberty, I say; for you will find she is not so at present. — She says, she hopes I shall at once see the propriety of her complying with his request, in regard to keeping their marriage for a while a secret. I long to know what you, Harriot, think of the reason he gives for making it. I confess they appear to have some weight, as well as her's for consenting to it, yet I do not like it. I wish he had

less

less ambitious views. Why so anxious to increase a fortune already affluent? I fear, men are at best but unaccountable animals. My gentle Fanny would have been content, nay, happy, I well know, with even half of what he already possesses. I cannot, cannot, Harriot, approve of this concealment. I shudder to think of the light she may in the mean time be looked on. May it not give rise to a thousand mortifying conjectures? — yet, not for worlds would I hint this to the dear girl: on the contrary, I pray that her conscious innocence may preserve her from being pained by an idea of this mortifying, humiliating nature; but, de-

licate as Sir Charles's sentiments are on every subject, I wonder this did not strike him — true, they propose living very retired, but still it must be known such a pair do live in the neighbourhood — Why did he not change his name? By that means his secret might have been securely kept, more securely, at least, though even then it is hardly possible it should for any length of time. Is he not liable to meet with some who know him at every step he takes? He is not of a rank to pass unnoticed, or unknown; and this old uncle may live for ages. — In short, Harriot, it is plain there is no happiness in this life to be expected without alloy;

joy; if we have no distress, we infallibly contrive to create some: so that high and low, rich and poor, are all upon a par in that article. — Surely Sir Charles need have had as little as any mortal; rich, perfectly independent and wholly his own master — yet, behold the situation into which he has brought himself, for no earthly reason that any reasonable mortal can discover — well may it be said, money is the root of all evil — was it not money that tempted my father to play the tyrant as he did? and is it not the same that tempts Sir Charles thus to play the fool? — I have not patience with him, engaging, handsome and elegant as he

is.—What a dull, dreary life at this rate must poor Fanny live ! and what, I repeat, must the neighbourhood think of her, if they think at all, and a most extraordinary set they must be if they do not? Sure I am, a circumstance of that mysterious nature would afford conversation at every tea table in our's for a twelve-month — would to the Lord I had gone with her ! I think I could have contrived to have put this mercenary whim out of his head — it is absolutely unaccountable to me, Harriot; so unlike him, so very unlike what I should have expected from a man of his liberal, generous way of thinking: it plainly proves, that theory

and practice are two very different things. One distressing, and, in all probability, a no less fruitless piece of business it has spared me; you see I am forbid to inform my father — this I fully intended to do the first favourable moment that offered. I cannot say I had any great hopes that my eloquence would have power to soften him, yet I thought it worth a trial, and had prepared a most flaming encomium on the character of Sir Charles; to be sure, after having till now pretended ignorance of the whole affair, I must have made no very capital figure on the occasion: but that I gave up for my Fanny's sake, and courageously resolved to

bear like a philosopher whatever portion of indignation might follow in consequence of my confession — but all that is now at an end; and I rejoice not a little that I had not attempted it before this prohibition arrived. — I have just sent off a long letter to the dear creature, and have said all I could think of to remove that dejection too visible in her's — Heaven grant it may produce all the happy effects I wish. — Farewel, Harriot! you see I have nothing of importance to say concerning myself; my days are likely to glide on in no very animating manner. Aunt Deborah and I make but so so company. And as for my father, he has
not

not so far recovered his natural sweetness of temper, as to try piquet or backgammon. I hope this affair will not prevent our going to London in the winter. Before it happened, he had determined to spend a few months there, hoping Charles would by that time be arrived from America. We might have cried our eyes out before he would have gone merely to please us. I have never been there since I left school, and then only for a few weeks. Judge, then, whether I have not a trifling desire to have a second peep — and a mere peep, I presume, I shall have if we do go, for he is no great friend to gadding, as he calls it; and now, I suppose, he will keep

a sharper look-out than ever, lest I, too, should meet with a Sir Charles. I think he has some little reason to be convinced it is neither bolts nor bars that can secure a daughter if she is inclined to bid adieu to her family mansion; so he had better do the genteel thing, and trust to my discretion. — Let all my ways be unconfined, and clap a padlock on my mind. — Once more, adieu!

CLARA FAULKLAND,

The

The same to the same.

YOU are pleased to chide me for my negligence, as you civilly call it, in not writing to you, Harriot; but not having again heard from my poor Fanny, of what can I write, since, for any thing I have either done, seen, or heard, since my last, I might as well have been in a comfortable nap. — I am wrong, my dear, in the one instance, for I have heard something which could have alone prevented that — a hint, child, dropped a few days ago, on the subject of our London journey — not to me, you may guess, for I am by no means so far

restored to favour as that comes to, but to aunt Deborah, who has the charge of all our domestic matters; I caught them in the fact of talking about it; and though no more was said after I entered the room, I took the first opportunity to ask her a few questions as soon as he left it. — Do, my good aunt, cried I, tell me what my father has been saying to you about going to London; I, you know, am now in disgrace, and have no chance of being let into the secret except by you. “ Oh, Clara, Clara!” said she, shaking her head, “ I wish
 “ some folks may not have secrets
 “ of more importance they could reveal if they thought proper —
 “ what

“ what my brother may believe, I
 “ know not, but the world will ne-
 “ ver persuade me you are so igno-
 “ rant as you pretend in regard to
 “ Fanny — nay, he must be of the
 “ same opinion ; but, having too
 “ much reason, I am sorry to say,
 “ seems determined to make no far-
 “ ther inquiries about her.” Well,
 said I, as I know you are a good
 creature, and sincerely love the dear
 girl, I will set your heart at rest, as
 far as I am at liberty to do so, on two
 conditions — first, that you conceal
 what I tell you from my father ; and
 secondly, that you inform me whe-
 ther we go to London, and when—
 She eagerly agreed to my proposals ;

and no wonder, Harriot, since she was going to make an excellent bargain, for, in reality, a short time would have let me into her secret without any conditions at all; however, I thought there could be no harm in telling her Fanny was not only married, but well married to a man of rank and fortune — this I did, assuring her she might depend upon it as a fact, though to his name and family she must be content to remain a stranger. — She was more delighted than you can conceive, and asked ten thousand questions about it, but none of them would I answer — “Why not tell your father this?” cried she; “who knows
 “ what

“ what happy effects it might pro-
 “ duce ? ” — Because, replied I, I am
 not at liberty to tell him ; and I have
 stretched a point, in order to oblige
 you. — “ And are you sure, posi-
 “ tively sure, Clara, this is truth ? ”
 Most certain, said I, there is nothing
 on earth more so. The honest soul
 actually cried for joy. I absolutely
 kissed her for this proof of her affec-
 tion — Well, now tell me, cried I,
 all about this London journey —
 “ Why, my dear, the truth is, your
 “ father is determined to spend the
 “ winter there. It seems, he has
 “ heard your brother is to be in
 “ England in a few months, and he
 “ wishes to be there to receive him :
 begin “ not

“ not that this is his only motive;
 “ he has business which requires his
 “ going, at least, he tells me so;
 “ though I believe his impatience to
 “ see his favourite would have been
 “ alone sufficient to carry him there”
 — But our house in Hanover square
 is let, said I; how is that point to be
 managed? — “ Oh, that will be a migh-
 “ ty easy matter, child; in London,
 “ if people have money in their
 “ pockets, they cannot be at a loss:
 “ however, your father is now, I
 “ believe, writing to a friend there
 “ to procure him one.” — And when
 does he talk of going? replied I, not
 a little delighted to find things so far
 advanced. — “ Why in about a fort-
 “ night

“ night or three weeks, my dear:
 “ but let me tell you, you are more
 “ obliged to my good offices than
 “ you imagine—he had no thoughts
 “ of either taking you or me with
 “ him, till I, well knowing that
 “ such a trip would be highly agree-
 “ able to you, watched for a favour-
 “ able moment to beg he would in-
 “ dulse you, adding, I was sure your
 “ brother would look upon it as a
 “ pleasing proof of his attention.
 “ This had no small weight,” con-
 tinued she, “ and, I believe, gained
 “ my point.”—You are a dear, good
 creature, my dear, dear aunt, cried I;
 and but for so kind a friend, what
 would now become of me, having
 lost

lost my Fanny?—" Ah, poor child!" replied she, " yet you tell me she is " happy—who would have believed " a creature so gentle, so mild, could " have had courage for such an un- " dertaking? Good heavens! I can " hardly yet persuade myself that it " is a truth."—— My father's entrance now put an end to our chat: they sat down to backgammon for the first time since our delightful bustle; and I left them, my mind filled with a thousand pleasant reflections on the prospect before me. I know I shall not enjoy quite so much pleasure as might be wished; but I am perfectly disposed to take things as I find them most thankfully.

fully. — Do not expect to hear from me again till I get there, unless I should happen to have something particular to tell you, which I do not at present expect. — So adieu till then. —

Yours ever,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

The

The same to the same.

I DID not intend writing again from hence, as I told you in my last; but I have got such a habit of scribbling, that I never see pen and ink without wishing to use them. Many an insignificant epistle is the consequence of this propensity. However, if I never contract a worse habit, this, I think, may be pardoned. — Not till every thing was finally settled, in regard to our going to London, did it once enter into my head to think what was to become of honest Frank — Sir Charles's man, I mean; nor am I quite sure I should
not

not have left him quietly here in his new occupation, without once thinking of him, had he not had more care of himself — he took an opportunity some days ago to speak to me on the subject — “Pray, Madam,” said he, “may I take the liberty to ask how I am to be disposed of when you leave the country?” —

The question actually startled me. Really, Frank, replied I, I am glad you put me in mind of that circumstance. You have now been so long in your present employment, that I had forgot you must probably be heartily tired of it — “Not at all, Madam,” cried he, “while I can be of any service to you, and the
“ most

“ most generous of masters, I am
 “ perfectly content: but will own,
 “ were it equally convenient, I
 “ could wish to have the honour of
 “ attending you to London.” —

Most readily would I gratify your
 wishes, said I, were it in my power;
 but a gardener will make no part of
 our household there. “ Have I

“ your permission,” cried he, “ to
 “ try my influence with my present
 “ master ?” — Oh, most willingly,

Frank; yet what hopes can you
 form, since, as I said before, we shall
 have no sort of occasion for one of
 your profession there? — “ But for
 “ a smart servant, well acquainted
 “ with the town, you possibly may,”

answered

answered he ; “ and I think I shall
 “ make a better figure in that sta-
 “ tion than in that I have the ho-
 “ nour to fill at present.”— If you
 can contrive to manage that point,
 said I, I shall be highly pleased,
 since I may want your assistance
 there as much as here ; if not, you
 have certainly a right to quit your
 place and return to Sir Charles, and
 leave me to do the best I can, in re-
 gard to my correspondence with my
 sister.— “ Let me alone, Madam ; I
 “ think I stand pretty well with his
 “ honour ; he often talks to me
 “ when walking in the garden — I
 “ will venture to express my regret
 “ at being left behind ; tell him I
 “ have

“ have formerly been a gentleman’s
 “ servant, &c. and, in short, have
 “ no doubt of success.” — I left him
 to do as he thought proper, and this
 very morning he came and told me
 he had succeeded; nay, my father
 was very well pleased, not only with
 the attachment he expressed, but with
 his offer of going, as he wished for a
 man who knew the town, which
 none of those we have at present do.
 I gave him joy, and, to say truth,
 was not a little pleased myself, since
 I might have found difficulty in ma-
 naging matters without him; at least,
 it is more than possible; for certain
 it is, should my father discover that
 I correspond with her, he could no
 longer

longer believe my pretended ignorance — I would not swear he does believe it, Harriot — but be that as it will, Frank's company will make all things secure; and so, as I said before, I am mighty glad he is to be of our party. My aunt, too, just now told me, she was very well pleased at it, as he was a very slightly well-behaved young man. — Adieu now positively for the last time till I get to Harley street, for there, I find, we have got a house. I must go and assist my Abigail in sorting all my things for our journey, as we are to set off next Monday. I have a presentiment that it will turn out
but

but a heavy, humdrum expedition;
yet here, now my Fanny is gone, it
would be still more so. —

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

The

The same to the same.

WELL, child, here I actually am in this dear, this delightful London—it appears like a dream to me, yet it is certainly a fact; and what is better still, I begin to have hopes things will turn out considerably better than I expected. Heaven knows whether aunt Deborah has betrayed the trust I reposed in her, in regard to my sister, but I shrewdly suspect it, because I can no otherwise account for the agreeable change I observe in my father's temper — If she has, he cannot but be pleased to find, that though in one instance she had the wicked-

ness to disobey his commands, she has not been quite so severely punished as he most piously wished. He must, Harriot, whatever he may think proper to acknowledge, be pleased to find she has not either disgraced herself or family. — Perhaps the change may be merely owing to the hopes of soon seeing my brother; for the above, to be sure, is but conjecture — no matter which, so his good humour does but continue; the effects, I trust, will help to keep up mine. My aunt is as busy as a bee in arranging matters up and down our new habitation, which is an excellent one; though I should have liked it infinitely better had it been nearer

nearer the parks, for the benefit of purer air; and I, as you see, have already taken to my old occupation, yet I hope I shall not have quite so much idle time on my hands as I have had; of course, you must not expect to be so frequently delighted and edified as in my days of rural felicity, with my epistles—I give you leave, however, to write to me as often as you please—Am I not a kind creature, Harriot?—Apropos—talking of creatures; as I was standing at the window of one of the inns at which we dined on the road, not knowing how to employ myself better, a smart post chaise and six drove up to the door, attended by

half a score fellows, some in, and some out of livery. I, you may be sure, looked out sharp to see the owner of all this pomp, and, putting on one of those smiles which I had been practising for some time before for doing execution with in London, placed myself in the best point of view — in a moment, out sprang such a beau, my dear, and on his breast such a blazing star; that what with its lustre, and that of his eyes, which by some means or other happened at that instant to meet mine, I had very near been struck motionless — he evidently was for some moments — could he fail, Harriot, seeing, as he did, your humble servant
 planted

planted there, hat and feathered as she was — Oh, impossible — with lingering steps and slow — he was obliged, however, to tear himself away, as I had prudently set him the example. — There, my dear, there is adventure the first — And is that all, Clara? you cry — why, very near, to say truth; however, as I know not how else to fill my paper, you shall have the sequel in a very few words, for, alas! a very few words will do the mighty business. After dinner my friend Frank took an opportunity to tell me, with a very grave face, Lord Morland had taken him aside, and been asking him a thousand questions concerning me,

such as, who I was? Where I came from? And where I was going? —

“ Pardon me, Madam,” continued

he, “ if I did wrong in answering to

“ the best of my knowledge; they

“ were not made impertinently; so

“ far from it, his Lordship spoke of

“ you in raptures, and with the

“ highest respect.” — Very likely,

Frank, replied I; but as he could

have no business with either one or

other of these particulars, there was

no necessity for your being quite so

communicative; however, as I am

persuaded you had no ill intention, I

blame you the less. His Lordship

ought to have known better than to

show himself so inquisitive in mat-

ters

ters which did not concern him. —

“ Ah, Madam !” said he, with a look as much as to say, such beauty as yours may surely plead his excuse,

“ it was certainly very natural ; and

“ really I could hardly find in my

“ heart to refuse doing even more.”

— How is that ? cried I. Pray what more did he impertinently desire ? —

He now looked rather silly, and only answered, “ Nay, Madam, I did not

“ do it” — Well, well, replied I, so much the better ; you said quite

enough to a stranger. — “ Not a

“ stranger neither,” cried Frank,

“ for I had the honour of serving

“ his Lordship before I lived with

“ Sir Charles.” — Oh, oh ! cried I,

then I can more easily account for
 your compliance; that, I confess, is
 some apology: but remember, I
 know nothing of him; so pray do
 not let me be the subject of any
 farther conversation. He left me,
 though I could plainly see he was a
 little disappointed at my not pressing
 to know what it was he had so he-
 roically refused to oblige him in —
 this I judged it most prudent to for-
 bear, yet would have given a trifle to
 have known nevertheless. This dia-
 logue served to amuse my thoughts
 during the tedious evening; for my
 father, finding himself fatigued, chose
 to stay all night: and I should pro-
 bably have forgot it before morning,

had

had I not by accident heard his Lordship calling to one of his men, that he, too, should sleep there, and, perhaps, proceed no farther, as he had thoughts of proceeding next day to London. — I need hardly add, this gave rise to some trifling emotions in my gentle bosom, as I might, without the imputation of vanity, set the change in his plan down to my own account. — We had not gone a mile next day, when, behold, his Lordship's carriage passed ours; and, as my father is none of your flying travellers, he had time *en passant* to dart a most expressive glance at your Clara — it met my eyes, but, I give you my honour, went no farther;

my habit was fortunately buttoned, so it did not reach my heart. — To tell you the truth, I did not find it very flattering; that is, there was a kind of expression in it which, to be sure, said you are a divine creature; — but, in short, it was a very impertinent glance for all that; so I have set him down a man of the world — you have read a pair of volumes so called, Harriot; and, of course, know what I mean by the epithet — If he is such a horrid being, pray heaven I may never more set eyes on him. — The adventure is now really finished; for after that, we proceeded quietly to Harley street — my father's features considerably relaxed

laxed from their late stiffened condition; my aunt impatient to see if all things were ready for our reception according to orders; and I, my dear, mighty easy about that matter, fully satisfied to find myself actually in London — so, fare ye well. — I now only want a letter from my Fanny, to make me as happy as a queen — one must take it for granted all queens are happy —

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

H 6

FANNY

FANNY to CLARA.

CLARA, my dear Clara, what can I write that will not distress you! — To you, and only you, can I freely open my heart; and must confess, that heart is oppressed with a melancholy I cannot conquer — yet my amiable Sir Charles is all my heart can wish; tender, assiduous, engaging; he, with the sweetest attention, watches my every look, that he may anticipate my wishes, even in the most trifling things; he seems to live but in my smiles: but those smiles, my Clara, are too often overcast with clouds. What can I do,

YNNAT D H my

my love? How conceal from his penetrating eyes the sorrow which preys upon me, and destroys my peace of mind? — To be thus banished from my family; thus separated from the sister, the friend of my heart; and none of his, as I fondly hoped, to make up to me in some measure the loss of my own — alas! had I foreseen — But, Clara, I am ungrateful to the best of men; indeed I am, my Clara — I have every reason to be happy; believe me, I have. Do not let what I have foolishly said make you uneasy; it is a weakness time will conquer; time will also, I doubt not, produce a pleasing change in my situation. Am I not greatly

to blame for giving way to one repining, one murmuring reflection? Surely, I never was so fond of society, nor so much accustomed to it — why, then, find this solitude so irksome? — But it is not; on the contrary, were I restored to my father's favour, and blessed with the company of my Clara, it would be a Paradise to me. Sir Charles has repeatedly pressed me, in the kindest manner, to let him introduce to me some of the families in the neighbourhood: but is there not danger in it, my dear? Is it not more prudent to wait till that anxiously-wished-for day arrives, in which he can publicly acknowledge me? I wish only to be

presented to his relations, to his own friends. From the society of strangers, especially while a fear remains, that the secret he so earnestly wishes to conceal might by that means be divulged, I could enjoy no satisfaction; I should be in continual apprehensions, and under a most painful restraint. This I have told him, and he kindly yields to my reasons for declining it; yet it hurts me, on his account, as it prevents him from engaging in a thousand amusements he might otherwise partake of; not that he has ever yet shewn the least symptoms by his behaviour of weariness or disgust: so far from it, he has ten thousand times assured me the com-
pany

pany of his Fanny was all the world to him. — Ought not this tender assurance to set my heart at rest? — I have already told you, we found an excellent library here, and, also, musical instruments of various kinds; with these, and my pencil, I pass my time — if not quite so cheerfully as when my Clara used to partake them with me, yet very happily; Sir Charles has a fine taste, and he is delighted to assist me in my studies. My voice, which he takes pleasure in telling me first drew him to my enchanted castle, has such an attraction, he repeatedly declares, as would, independent of all my other perfections, secure me his forever. The

song I was singing on that memorable day he has made me sing ten thousand times, Clara. — In this engaging manner does the most amiable of men flatter me. What, then, is wanting to my felicity? — Alas! I have already told you; and you, I fear, will think unreasonable; but let me just whisper in your ear, my love; is he not, amiable and engaging as he is, a little unreasonable himself? Why, else, for the sake of adding to a fortune already affluent, thus give up the joys of society, and all the pleasures of that world in which he is so formed to shine, and to which he has ever till now been accus-

accustomed? I fear, indeed, my Clara, I fear, from this circumstance, he carries his love of riches to a faulty excess. Doating upon me as he does, were not that the case, would he not have had a pride in presenting me to those friends he perpetually tells me would adore me, did they but know me? — The love of riches, I say, then, must be his predominant passion; yet how very inconsistent with his noble, generous sentiments! — it is unaccountable; it is astonishing — But let us remember, the very best of us are but imperfect creatures, the very best have their blemishes, and my Sir Charles has only this
 one;

one : in every other instance he is absolutely faultless ; and even this, his unbounded love for his Fanny may possibly strengthen — yes, I will believe it is for her sake, and only hers, he wishes for an increase, and shall I, then, condemn him ? — Heaven forbid ! no ; rather let me severely condemn myself for what I have wrote. Surely, if he has but one fault, one single failing, his Fanny ought to have been blind to that — Forgive me, thou most amiable of men ; forgive me ; never, never again will I allow my pen such liberties. — Clara, my love, I find my heart considerably relieved since I began

gan chatting with you — my spirits were rather low — they are revived — I am quite happy ; indeed, indeed I am. — Adieu, my friend, my sister ! I shall impatiently expect to hear of your arrival in London, and all you see and do there. — Oh ! may your perseverance in the paths of duty be rewarded by finding a man worthy to possess such a heart as yours ; and may it be the study of his life to render you happy as you deserve to be ! — Let me add, to complete all, may he obtain the precious gift of that heart from the hands of our father ! — Ah, Clara ! this — but no more — then will your
mind

mind never experience those pangs
of self reproach which will at some
moments torture and distress that of
your

Affectionate

FANNY.

CLARA.

CLARA to FANNY.

THE first page of your letter, my dearest sister, distressed me more than I can express; and had I not had the consolation to find, as I read on, your dejection wear off, you would have received a dull answer from me, in spite of my inclination to amuse you to the utmost of my power. Shall I chide you, my love, for giving way to those fruitless, and, I would hope, causeless reflections, which thus torment your too feeling heart? Or shall I honestly confess you have some little reason? Yes, it is very little, my Fanny. Your present situation

ation is aukward ; there is no deny-
 ing it : but let us do Sir Charles the
 justice to believe he has reasons for
 his conduct ; perhaps, more weighty
 reasons even than those he mentions.
 Secure of his affection, and conscious
 of your own irreproachable conduct,
 endeavour to wait without repining
 for that happy day which will put
 an end to all your present trouble
 and perplexities ; it cannot, my love,
 be a very distant one : no doubt,
 your engaging Sir Charles, is now
 doing all in his power to hasten it.
 A precipitate discovery of his secret
 might not only retard, but wholly
 prevent the purpose he has in view.
 It is natural to suppose he will tire of
 solitude

solitude sooner than you. Let's accustomed to retirement, depend upon it, he will rather sacrifice the hopes he has so long indulged, than continue in it much longer. Were he absolutely dependent upon this uncle, it would be another affair; prudence, then, might, perhaps, tempt him to practise a degree of self-denial, which in his situation is by no means necessary; nor will he do it much longer, as I said before, take my word for it — it is unnatural, it is inconsistent with his character, to believe it. — I agree with you, my dear, that he seems to set more value on wealth than I can think it deserves — but remember, it may not be so easy as

we

we imagine to resign without a murmur an estate he has till now been accustomed to reckon upon as his own. Let us make every reasonable allowance for him, my love — the best of men have their failings, as you observe, and the best of women, too, I presume; though, after reading this my matronly lecture, you will, no doubt, be tempted to say, I certainly am an exception to the general rule. — And now let me treat you with a few lines in regard to my noble self. — I hope you have read with becoming wonderment my lordly adventure on the road to London. It is plain my letter, in which it was honourably men-

tioned, had not reached your fair hands when yours was wrote, or you could not possibly have passed by it unnoticed — If you could, I despair of finding any subject for the future likely to meet with a less mortifying fate: but I will not suppose it — I take it for granted, then, you imagine me now deeply engaged in carrying on this adventure; that his Lordship is contriving a variety of schemes to gain admission to the presence of his fair unknown — Oh! I forget, honest Frank cleared up that point, by telling him every circumstance respecting me — well, then, to gain admission, we'll say; and that I am in the prettiest agitation

imaginable every time a rap comes to the door, flattering myself, it can be no other than my noble lover, or, at least, an emissary from him with a *billet doux*. — No, my dear, no; you are woefully mistaken: that is, your too-lively imagination has, as my father once said to me, outstripped the mark; things are not yet come to that — what his Lordship may be contriving I will not presume to guess; but hitherto I have had no other proofs of his constancy than seeing him parading, once a day at least, by our windows, sometimes on foot, sometimes in his carriage — the latter, I suppose, lest I should fancy the equipage in which I first

saw him, and all the parade of pomp attending it, were only borrowed plumes. This mode of paying his devoirs is a good deal in the Spanish stile — I shall next expect a serenade. In the mean time, let me tell you a secret, my dear — I have seen a creature, who, without taking half that trouble, has — has — how shall I express myself? — In short, who, with half that trouble, might, I believe, make a greater progress in my heart — aye, now my Fanny begins to brighten up, and read with proper attention — Proceed, dear Clara, she cries; do proceed, and tell me who he is, where you saw him, &c. &c. Patience, my love — One day last week

week an old friend of my father's called upon him to ask a question about business — I know not what — he was pressed to prolong his visit; but said, he could not, having left a young gentleman at the door in his carriage waiting for him, with whom he was going to dine at the other end of the town. — My father, looking at his watch, and seeing it was early, instantly rung the bell, and ordered the servant to go with his compliments to the gentleman, and beg he would walk in, at the same time reproaching Mr. Mason (his friend's name) for being so ceremonious as to leave him there. Many civil things would have passed between

the two old Grecians, I make no doubt, had not the entrance of the stranger put an untimely end to them. — Shall I confess, Fanny, his entrance also put an end, or very, very near it, to your Clara's hitherto-boasted indifference? — Such a form, such a pair of eyes, such hair, and such a set of teeth, never before, I believe in my conscience, met together in one male creature — it was really a shame to see such profusion of beauty thrown away upon a man; indeed, it would have been more than enough to turn the silly head of any woman; so, perhaps, it is as well as it is. — “Sir Edward Mufgrave,” said Mr. Mason, as he entered,

tered, presenting him to my father, aunt Deborah, and your Clara. He paid his compliments in a manner — not in the common stile, you may be sure, Fanny, after the description I have given of his elegant person; but so easy, so gracefully, so — so — in short, so perfectly to my taste, that, during his stay, I could think of nothing but his provoking engagement at the other end of the town. — I had the consolation to observe that he, on the contrary, seemed to have quite forgot it. His friend several times looked at his watch, by way of giving him a civil hint; but, to my no small satisfaction, he paid very little attention to it: indeed, his

eyes and attention were better employed — it is true, his conversation was chiefly addressed to my father; it ran upon our affairs in America, of course: for what else do the men now talk of? — to my father it is a theme particularly interesting, you know, our Charles being there — Yet, though so deeply engaged in politics, he contrived to say and to do a thousand more than barely civil things to your Clara; and she had reason to believe, if his dinner was spoiled, it might justly be laid to her charge. — “A fine young gentleman, that,” cried my aunt, as soon as they were gone; “there is something uncommonly engaging in
 “ his

“ his address. Don’t you think so,
 “ brother?” turning to my father—
 “ Yes,” replied he; “ he appears to
 “ be better informed than most others
 “ I have met with of his age: but
 “ if he stays long in this dissipated
 “ town” (for he is but lately re-
 turned from his travels, Fanny) “ I
 “ will not answer for what he may
 “ be by this time twelvemonth.”—
 I said nothing; but paid it off in
 thinking, my dear. It is not, you
 know, for us misses to give their opi-
 nions of these matters, at least, un-
 asked, and mine was not. Now,
 would you believe it, Fanny? so
 simple, so disinterested a being am I,
 that were Lord Morland, decorated

with a new star for the occasion, and this charming Sir Edward, with no other decorations than what nature has kindly bestowed upon him, both in my offer at this precious moment, I should not hesitate in my choice. Very, very little, it is true, do I know of either at present; yet to Sir Edward would I present my lily hand. — Adieu, my love! Pray look upon all this as merely an effort to amuse you. Should you imagine I have the folly to expect either of them on so slight a foundation, you must, also, imagine me a very weak creature, and that I positively deny. — Once more, adieu! May your next prove to me, that
 your

your amiable heart is more at ease
 that when you wrote last, *faites mes*
baïsemains à Monsieur votre épouse,
 and believe me my Fanny's most
 tenderly-affectionate.

CLARA FAULKLAND.

6
Miss
 No mortal, I dare venture to say;
 on very, very few — And in hers
 a short

Miss FAULKLAND to Miss HARVY.

I HOPE you got my last, Harriot, in which I sent you a copy of my Fanny's letter. I wept over its contents; and so, I am sure, would you, at the first reading, and yet, I presume, like myself, laugh at your folly after a moment's reflection: for, in fact, what cause have we to shed tears? I grant, as I freely owned to the dear creature, there are some circumstances in her present situation not exactly as I could wish: but who is exactly in such a situation? No mortal, I dare venture to say; or, very, very few — And in hers,
a short

a short time, I trust, must make a change for the better — either the old soul of an uncle will or will not be reconciled to the step his elegant nephew has taken, when informed of it: if he smiles, so much the better; if he frowns, Sir Charles need not care — and if he will care, all I can say is, he is not quite so perfect a being as we have ventured to pronounce him. — And now, dropping all farther comments on the subject, let me give you a sketch of my own situation. — I begin to fancy this London journey will turn out mighty pleasant, Harriot. As for my father, he is quite a new man; the rust he had contracted in the country

country is wearing off by degrees — nothing like society to brighten up one's faculties — a few years more spent in retirement would have converted him into an absolute snarler: but, thank heaven, and this joyous jaunt, he is now in a fair way to become a sociable being. On our first arrival, every rap at the door produced a peevish exclamation of some kind or other; but he now hears them like a philosopher. Both him and aunt Deborah had formerly a pretty numerous acquaintance in this dear town; many of them are, to be sure, dead and buried in the course of ten years: for so long have they, like a pair of silly souls, buried themselves

selves in the joyless country, most
 of which time Fanny and I, you
 know, were in a boarding school.
 The death of our amiable mother,
 the world said, determined him to
 quit the busy scenes of life: but, to
 tell you the truth, I never gave him
 credit for so much feeling — How
 could I, Harriot, railing, as he per-
 petually was, at every thing in a fe-
 male form? Has he not a thousand
 times declared, he looked upon wo-
 men as merely necessary evils, &c.?
 — But I forgive him. — There are
 men, my dear, or my sagacity fails
 me, who look upon us in a more
 flattering light; Lord Morland, for
 instance. By what I have lately heard
 of

of his character, I dare swear he would be perfectly content were there no other beings in the creation but woman — there are noble sentiments for you, Harriot! — however, I hate all extremes; and so, my dear, I give up all farther designs on his Lordship's capacious heart: I have no ambition to share it with the multitude. — But there is a heart I would give my little finger to call wholly mine; and this treasure is enclosed in such a casket, Harriot! — Nature, I am positive, formed it on purpose to show us what absolute perfection is, and, having finished her incomparable work, stamped on it the name of Sir Edward Musgrave — what

— what a mercy it is that the whim of making him an emperor did not seize her ; then might I in vain have given every finger I have to possess it : but as she luckily did not, why, my dear, I am not altogether hopeless — no matter how we became acquainted — I told that to Fanny, and hate repetitions ; suffice it to say, we are acquainted, have been so above a month, and that he seems determined not to drop it if he can possibly help it ; a Mr. Mason introduced him to us, apparently by mere chance : but it is an event of such a delightful nature, that I look upon it, it had been written in the book of fate some thousand years before the said

Mr.

Mr. Maſon was brought into exiſtence — You muſt know, my dear, he is but lately returned from abroad ; and the very day I firſt ſaw him was actually engaged to dine with a party, where a lady was to be, as if by accident obſerve, whom the late Sir Edward had made a point with him on his death bed he ſhould marry. She is, it ſeems, the daughter of his very particular friend ; was left an orphan, with an immenſe fortune wholly in her power. Sir Edward and her father had prudently ſettled the matter between them, without conſulting the parties moſt concerned ; my Edward, I had almoſt ſaid, was at that time on his travels. His father,

father, finding his health declining, wrote for him to return home immediately; he arrived, however, too late: but with Mr. Mason he left instructions in regard to the projected match — the lady's father had been dead three or four years — she had likewise been informed of their mutual desire of uniting their families by this marriage, and, as I was saying, that very day was the first time of their seeing each other. I should add, there was to be no compulsion exerted on either side; it was a thing much wished by the parents; but that was all. Little did I dream, at the time I first saw him, of what importance the visit was he was going to make,

make, or how nearly it might concern my future happiness. — What his thoughts were I dare not positively say, lest I should in the end find myself mistaken : but I shrewdly suspect, he even then wished Miss Moleworth might resemble your friend Clara. — All this, Harriot, we learned a few days after from Mr. Mason, except the last surmise, which is entirely my own — he dined with my father ; and on somebody mentioning his young friend Sir Edward, he gave us the above particulars. I was upon thorns to know the result of the interview : but, though I certainly might, without creating the smallest suspicion, have freely asked it,

it, the question stuck in my throat, and for my life I could not hem it up — my aunt, however, found it no sort of difficulty; she at once saved me the conflict. — “Why, faith, Madam,” said he, “I know not how the matter will end; he made no objections to paying the young lady a visit, nor did he find any to her person. When I asked, as we returned, his opinion of her, his praises, however, were rather cold; but I hoped a second interview might have inspired him with more lover-like expressions; for she is not only rich, but by all the world pronounced remarkably handsome.” — Har-

riot,

riot, that was a pleasant stroke; was
 it not? It went directly to my heart
 like a shock of electricity. — “It is
 “amazing,” said my father, “that
 “a young fellow, sensible as he ap-
 “pears to be, should not at one
 “glance see the advantage of such a
 “match.” — “Perhaps, he does,”
 replied Mr. Mason; “but young
 “men of his age, and, let me add,
 “of his sentiments, for he has some
 “very old-fashioned ideas of matri-
 “mony, are not always governed
 “by the laws of prudence. In point
 “of interest, he certainly never can
 “do a wiser thing: but, handsome
 “as she is, she may not, perhaps,
 “answer his notions of beauty.” —
 “Bear-

“ Beauty !” said my father, “ what
 “ a farce ! — Can a woman with a
 “ fortune like hers fail to be beauti-
 “ ful ? I shall have the worse opi-
 “ nion of him while I live, if I find
 “ he is not married to her in a
 “ month.” — You take it for grant-
 ed, then, said I, having plucked up
 a little courage during their dialogue,
 that the young lady can have no ob-
 jections to Sir Edward ? — “ And
 “ very reasonably we may,” cried
 my father ; “ has he not every thing
 “ to recommend him you girls look
 “ for in a husband ? Is he not hand-
 “ some, graceful and well bred ? — I
 “ do not say he possesses no accom-
 “ plishments of a more graceful na-
 “ ture ;

"ture ; but what woman ever trou-
 "bled her head about them?" —
 Thank you, my dear Sir, for the
 compliment, said I, smiling ; our
 sex are infinitely obliged to you, no
 doubt. I hope Sir Edward does us
 more justice. If I thought he did
 not, I would contrive to let Miss
 Moleworth into that part of his sen-
 timents ; and my word for it, he
 might then sue in vain. — This pro-
 duced a smile on all sides ; and a ser-
 vant telling us just then that coffee
 was ready, my aunt and I went into
 the drawing room, leaving the two
 gentlemen to settle the point as they
 thought proper. From that time, I
 fear, or, rather, his friend, Mr. Ma-
 son,

son, I fancy, fears Sir Edward's visits have been more frequent in Harley street than in Bedford square; and I have some little reason to be of the same opinion, Harriot. The latter is at such an intolerable distance, you know, that it would require an additional pair of horses to drag a man there as often as she, I suppose, would wish; now from Cavendish square, where he lives, to our house, is but a step, which makes all the difference imaginable.—Now a word or two of my noble admirer, Lord Morland, and I have done, for it is high time, I am sure. — All I can say, he haunts me like a shadow; go where I will, there he is; last Sun-

day, when at church, who should I see at my elbow but his Lordship: this pious device he fancies, I presume, cannot fail to produce a happy effect; and must have cost him no small mortification, for I dare swear he has not been in one before since he was christened, nor then neither, it is most probable. I do not believe it was a premeditated step: but he by accident was passing by as I went in — with a look intended to inform me of his motive, he at once stopped his carriage and followed me: not into my seat, indeed, but the very next. I am sorry to say, he spoiled my devotion: nor were his directed to the proper object, you

may well believe — he is a vile fellow, Harriot, I am positive; his impertinent eyes plainly declare it — handsome he is; but I detest him most cordially for all that. — When the service was over, behold him ready to hand me into the coach; he took my hand, without giving me time to withdraw it, and, pressing it most intolerably, whispered something about divinity, happiness, blessed opportunity, and I know not what stuff of that nature. I only bowed with an air of surprise; as much as to say, I know you not, and of course am rather amazed at your forward familiarity. — It is pretty plain the man has formed some

silly views or other, and I suppose
 will never be at rest till he has told
 me what they are ; yet he will not
 clearly explain them, I fancy, since
 I have reason to believe they will not
 very well bear it — how imperti-
 nent, Harriot, to dare to entertain
 any such, for I am in no doubt con-
 cerning the nature of them, because
 truly I happen to please his taste,
 and he chancs to be a lord. Did I
 wear a sword, with what pleasure
 could I run a being of that kind
 through the body ! — He has not
 even youth to excuse him ; for on a
 nearer view, I find he is some years
 past his bloom, though to see him,
en passant, he does not appear above
 thirty.

thirty. I hope I shall never have
occasion to waste my ink upon him
again — so, adieu !

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

The same to the same.

I AM uneasy, Harriot, that I do not hear from my beloved Fanny — what can be the meaning of it! I have written to her twice since my last to you, and though that is now a full month, have not had one line from her. This casts a damp on all my pleasures — what, I say, can be the meaning of her unusual long silence! — I have a thousand agreeable things to tell you; but cannot find in my heart to begin, while thus anxious about the dear creature. Sometimes I please myself with the idea, that Sir Charles has settled every

ry

ry thing, and that they mean to surprise me by their arrival in town; at others, I tremble lest she should be ill, and unable to inform me of it; yet he could surely write were that the case. — I must lay down my pen, Harriot, though I fully meant to treat you with a long letter. I will, at least, lay it by till the post hour is past; perhaps I may hear to-day; if not, it is in vain for me to attempt writing, I am so unsettled, so very uneasy. —

In continuation.

IT is two days since I began this letter, my dear Harriot. I believe it never would have been finished,

had I not since that time received two packets by the same post from our beloved Fanny. — Thank heaven, my fears were groundless; she is in perfect health, she tells me: but, as if fate never intended she should be quite at ease, she is now unhappy about her adored Sir Charles. She says, she has of late observed a dejection, a thoughtfulness in his manner, a something, in short, which she cannot well describe, to which, till now, he has been a stranger. She has in vain begged him to tell her the cause. He assures her he is unconscious of it; and, pressing her with tenderness to his heart, intreats her not to entertain an idea of that nature.

nature. She adds, though something evidently preys upon his spirits, she has the happiness to assure me, his affection for her is rather, if possible, increased than diminished. This, Harriot, is the substance of her letters, for she touches on the same distressing subject in both. I have not time to copy them for you, nor can I send the originals, as I have not yet answered them. — And now let me tell you some of the thousand agreeable things I talked of in the beginning of this epistle. I fear I have rather exaggerated in point of number; but that is a trifle.

K 5

Sir

Sir Edward continues to pay me his devoirs as assiduously, or more so, indeed, than ever; and has rendered himself so highly agreeable to my father and aunt, that, I believe, they both forgive his neglect of the fair Moleworth — and very fair she is, Harriot, I do assure you: perhaps, had I reason to fear her as a rival, I should not so readily do justice to her charms: but that not being the case, I can behold them without the shadow of envy; nay, I even feel exceedingly for her disappointment. — She loves him, then, you cry. — Most assuredly she does, Harriot; though I have only my own conjectures for it: but those,

added

added to his numberless attractions, put the matter beyond all possible doubt. We were the other night at the opera, Sir Edward of our party, and who should we see in an opposite box but the identical Miss Molefworth, flirting with my very honourable lover, Lord Morland. I knew him, of course, at the first glance, though, who the lady was, till Sir Edward told me, I knew not. I believe we were all four a little embarrassed at the meeting; and two of the four would, I fancy, have changed their seats without much regret. His Lordship, for instance, looked as if he would gladly have taken that of the charming Edward;

and, if I mistake not, Miss Moleworth would as willingly have filled mine: but this you see, my dear, would by no means have answered their purpose; since, by that manœuvre the parties would have remained in *statu quo*, as to the material article, having only moved from one box to another. — Do you comprehend me? — I have rather made a jumble of it; but let it pass. I fear my amiable lover, for such he now declaredly is, Harriot, perceived a trifling palpitation or so in my gentle bosom, on his answering my question of, did he know who that brilliant figure was opposite to us? — for she was covered with a profusion

of jewels. No sooner had he named her, than I felt my face in a glow — he saw it, and, with a look which instantly set my foolish heart at rest, tenderly pressed my hand — to his lips he would have pressed it, I presume, had we been in a less public place: but in a few minutes it was his turn to feel a like sensation, and to bear it, too, without receiving so sweet a consolation; for I could not quite so decently press his. His Lordship now left his sparkling companion, and came over to us. I should have told you, it is some time since he has, by some means or other, made a kind of acquaintance with me, though I have given him
every

every reason to see it is an honour I set very little value on. It had never once entered my head to mention him to Sir Edward — what, then, must he think on seeing him address me in the easy, familiar stile of an intimate acquaintance; so familiarly, indeed, that I was astonished at his impertinence — for what, Harriot, could be more so? I cannot tell you how horridly I was vexed; yet what could I do? To have expressed my resentment might, perhaps, at once have relieved Sir Edward; but might it not, also, have produced fatal effects? This I feared, and, in order to prevent it, was compelled to suffer his provoking assiduities for an

age.

age. At length, he thought proper to return to Miss Molesworth, who, I could perceive, did not receive him very graciously at first; but, in a short time, it appeared he had made his peace, for I saw her chat and smile as if he had never offended. — Not so my charming Sir Edward. He had, during this scene, put on a rather stately air; conscious he had just cause, I felt no inclination to play the fool by following his example, but, in as few words as I could, told him all that had passed between me and his Lordship, from the moment I first beheld him at the inn. — “How I adore your candour, your condescending goodness,

“ness,

“ nefs, my lovely Clara,” cried he,
 with transport; “ forgive me, moft
 “ engaging of your fex; forgive my
 “ petulance — I ought to have
 “ known you better; I ought to
 “ have feen the impertinent cox-
 “ comb met with no encouragement
 “ — nay, I did fee it; yet fo infa-
 “ tuated was I, I could not”——

Enough, enough, cried I, giving
 him my hand, as a proof that he
 was forgiven. Do not be too lavish
 of your praifes, left you fhould
 “ fpoil me; remember I am but a poor
 weak woman. — He preffed it to his
 lips now, Harriot, though at the ha-
 zard of covering me with confufion,
 which I muft have been had any
 mortal

mortal observed him. Glad was I when the curtain dropped ; for I own to you, I had paid very little attention to the performance. Luckily my father and aunt had made ample amends for our neglect ; theirs had been so entirely engrossed, that they knew nothing of what we were either saying or doing. When we got to the door, behold his Lordship in waiting—I pretended not to see him ; but hurrying through the crowd, got into the carriage without his assistance — Sir Edward's was also ready, and happy was I to see it drive off with him in it, for till then I had not been perfectly at ease. He called upon me next day, and I then gave him

him a more minute account of my acquaintance with Lord Morland. We both agreed in his being a worthless character. I trust, however, I, at least, shall have no farther proofs of it. What a despicable being is a libertine, Harriot, though accomplished and handsome as an angel! And really his Lordship, who certainly comes under that denomination, is both in the highest degree. Of what nature his impertinent views are in regard to me, will not admit of a doubt. I should be doubly mortified were it not as evident he beholds every other woman in the same horrid light. As to matrimony, it is an idea which, I dare say,

never

never entered his head, unless to hold it in sovereign contempt. — But enough of him; he has already occupied more place in my letters than he is entitled to: for the future, his Lordship must yield that place to the charming Edward. — I have told you, my father observes his flattering attentions to your Clara with visible pleasure; my aunt is delighted with him; and Mr. Mason often says, he was an idiot not to foresee what would happen, having once introduced him in Harley street. He frequently lectures me with great humour for thus disconcerting all his measures, and bids me beware how I trust myself within Miss Moleworth's

worth's reach, who will certainly put me to death for robbing her of her destined lover. What woman of spirit can bear a mortification of that nature with patience? Very few, I believe, Harriot; but there is no help for misfortunes — bear it she must, I fear, since I find myself in no humour to restore him to her; nor am I quite certain he would consent to it, could I work myself up to such an heroic pitch of generosity. — Have I not abundant cause to triumph, my dear, handsome and rich as she is? — With me, it is true, he ought in justice to get a pretty decent fortune; my father certainly can give it: but it is contrary to his

prin-

principles, you know — it is time enough, however, to talk of that matter. I believe Sir Edward has never yet bestowed a thought upon it; and why should I? True love, like ours, soars above such mercenary considerations, child. — A tap at my door. — Heavens, Harriot! — would you believe it? — Frank has this instant popped a billet doux into my hand from that vile Lord Morland. The man is mad, surely. What, in the name of common sense, can tempt him to pester me in this very ridiculous manner? — But it is my beauty, my irresistible charms, he tells me. — Wretch — I cannot express half the indignation I feel at
this

this moment; so insulting, so provokingly impertinent. — Is it usual, think you, for creatures of this stamp to treat women of family, of fortune, in this manner, Harriot? Had he not been informed who, and what I am, the wonder would have been less — but to presume I would encourage such insolent hopes! — Would to the Lord, as I once before said, I wore a sword! — True, he does not clearly explain the nature of those hopes: but his character is so well known, that had I more vanity than ever before fell to the lot of female, I could not flatter myself, wonderfully great as my attractions are, they can have wrought a miracle; and a miracle it must

must be which could inspire a mind like his with sentiments of honour; as easily may the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots. — And grant all this could be done, I have no passion for a reformed rake. — I shall give Mr. Frank a sharp lecture, I promise him; and should he dare to disobey my orders, I fear, however necessary I may hitherto have found him, we must part: indeed, he is no longer so, since my father has never shewn the smallest suspicion in regard to any letters I receive, and, it is most probable, winks at a correspondence he can hardly believe I do not carry on with my sister. This reflection makes

me

me easy about it. For once I will pardon him; though he could not fail to know he was acting wrong, since the footing Sir Edward is upon with me is pretty well known in the family: but should he offend a second time, away he marches. —

Adieu! I must talk to him before my wrath has time to evaporate, that I may do it the more effectually. —

Not for worlds would I have Sir Edward informed of this affair; for he, Harriot, does wear a sword. — Ah, heaven forbid! —

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

Honour-

Honourable Mr. BOOTHBY to Sir
CHARLES SOMERVILLE.

EVERY encomium you bestow on your amiable Fanny, Charles, gives me new cause to reproach you. You cannot doubt the sincerity of my friendship. Can I, then, without concern, see you thus involved in a most cruel, and, let me add, a most treacherous piece of business. You will, perhaps, tell me, I am the primary cause of all that has happened, since, but for me, you might never have heard of the lovely, injured girl. I confess there is more truth in this charge than I could now

with; yet, had I foreseen you would have carried things to such unjustifiable lengths, never should you have heard of her from me: it was, indeed, in an unguarded hour, when, you cannot have forgot, Champaign had too much heated our imaginations, that I gave you the description of her charms, which inspired you with the plan you have but too successfully put in practice. A thousand times have I, since that time, cursed my folly: yet I thought I knew you better than to suppose you capable of such a scene of villany.— Pardon me, my dear Charles; had I not a sincere regard for you, I would not treat you with so much freedom.

—Go you would, in spite of all I could say, in search of the angel, as you called her; and an angel she still is, Charles; the most rigid cannot in justice deny it. — But to have done with these fruitless reflections,

let me ask, What is it you propose?

—Lovely, engaging, and worthy as she is of a better fate, it is not in the nature of things you can be happy —

I know your sentiments too well to believe it. — Would to heaven it were in my power to give any advice that might be of service to you! but I can think of none; nor should I have wrote again on the subject, since it can be to no purpose, had it not been to tell you, your wife, tired,

I suppose, of her gallant, is actually returned to England; a friend of yours and mine saw her at Dover. He says, she looks wretchedly — in point of health, I mean; no great wonder that, considering the life she has led. All I can farther tell you about her is, that she was on her way to London. Make what use you think proper of this information. — You will tell me, perhaps, she has no right to trouble you, and, after what has passed, has probably no such design. — It may be so; yet, should she hear of the unpardonable step you have taken, Charles, who can say to what extremes a spirit like hers may hurry her? — I see nothing

you

you have left for it, but to fly the kingdom. If you can prevail on the amiable, the innocent Fanny to accompany you, my advice may, perhaps, appear less harsh; yet, did I not believe you incapable of inconsistency, and that you are really attached to her for life, rather than you should convey her to a foreign land, and there forsake her, I swear to you, I would myself rescue her from your unworthy hands, and place her where you should never see her more. The account you have repeatedly given me of her, has secured her an interest in my tenderest friendship. Never shall she want a protector while I have life, should you be base enough

to let her feel the want of one. I look upon myself as bound in honour to do it; for, have I not, in some measure, been the fatal cause of her undoing? And a disinterested friend she shall find me, Charles, lovely and engaging as she is. — You have brought yourself into a most unfortunate dilemma. It is madness to suppose you could much longer have continued in your present situation, supposing your wife had remained in hers. On what pretence can you do it, Charles? Hitherto you have, indeed, contrived to deceive her by a story, which I blush to think you capable of contriving. This imaginary uncle of yours cannot be sup-

posed

posed to live for ever: — but be that as it will, is it probable your charming Fanny can continue to believe a man of your rank, of your fortune, would give up all the joys of society, not to mention your keeping her thus a kind of prisoner, with no other view than to secure that wealthy, a spirit-like yours would certainly despise, did any such uncle exist? — No, no, my dear Charles; either I have formed a wrong idea of the much-injured Fanny, or she must soon discover there is a mystery in your whole conduct, which, though she may not be able to explain, must undoubtedly give rise to a thousand unfavourable conjectures, that will,

of course, wound both her peace of mind and your own. — Fly, then, my dear friend; fly. — I see nothing else you can do — to continue in England is madness; with honour you cannot do it much longer. — If you can contrive to conceal from the world the guilty step you have taken, they may still believe you have not yet forfeited all title to it. — From my soul I pity you both; nay, I even pity you more than I can find in my heart to blame you — but for this one unfortunate blot in your character, I know not a more worthy fellow. I will do you the justice to declare, what you have often declared yourself, had you met with a
 deserving

deserving wife, I believe, in my conscience, nature gave you every requisite to make an excellent husband. — Farewel! — Think of some plan immediately. If I can serve you, do not let any degree of severity you may find in this well-intended letter prevent you from commanding me freely, for I am most truly yours.

J. BOOTHBY.

L 5

CLARA

CLARA to HARRIOT.

WELL, my dear, Frank has protested, and vowed, and all that — and so he is forgiven. — I have just wrote a voluminous epistle to my poor Fanny; and in such a stile as will, I trust, dispel that dejection, which I cannot think of without experiencing more pain than I can express — it is cruel, it is inhuman in Sir Charles to bury the dear creature thus — and for what — it is to me absolutely incomprehensible, Harriot. — There seems something very mysterious in his conduct — so unnatural, so unlike himself — True,
 he

he gives a reason for it: but it is certainly a ridiculous one. Were he, as I have again and again observed, wholly dependent on this old soul of an uncle, it would be another affair; but he is not — and if this is not the cause of his thus living in retirement, why is his wife to be kept a stranger to what really is the cause? She tells me, he is now dejected in his turn. Is it not cruel, Harriot, if he is, that he will not let her share it with him, as, he must be sensible, she most tenderly would do? — I am distressed about her more than I can express; not that I can believe there is any great reason for it neither: but if she thinks there is, it is in the

mean time equally painful — I hope, however, as I was saying, my letter will amuse her. I am sure it will give her pleasure to know I have so fair a prospect of happiness in view — you, too, Harriot, I flatter myself, will rejoice with me, when I tell you, the engaging Sir Edward has, with my consent, spoke to my father on the subject, which he tells me, and which I have every possible reason to believe, is nearest his heart. His proposals were such as could not fail to meet with a gracious reception; for he is not only master of a fine fortune, but of a noble, generous heart. What settlements are to be made, I neither yet know, nor shall I ever care —

care — that generous heart is wholly mine; every thing else in life is totally indifferent to me. Were but my Fanny as happy, I should have no wish ungratified — and soon she must be so — I cannot, will not doubt it. — We went the other night to see Mrs. Siddons; the house, as usual, was most intolerably crowded: we had got a box, but with more difficulty than you can conceive. After all, great as she is, Harriot, it is rather ridiculous to make quite so much bustle about her. One would think the folks here could not die with a safe conscience, unless they had seen this wonder of wonders; and as Death is a being of no ceremony, often com-
ing

ing when least expected, they all crowd to gaze upon her at once, lest he should take them unawares. — Lord Morland, who, on some occasions, behaves with as little ceremony as the former, having, it would seem, secured no place, by horrid ill luck popped his unwelcome head into our box — I cannot say we had no room for him. — “May I presume
 “so far, on Miss Faulkland’s good
 “nature,” cried he, squeezing himself in, “as to hope she will take
 “pity on a poor fellow, who, till
 “now, has not been able to find a
 “spot unoccupied?” — I gave my Edward a look, by way of asking what answer I should give him; but he

he had seated himself at my back without waiting for it: it gave me less pain now, however, than it would formerly have done, as Sir Edward was perfectly acquainted with my sentiments; I, therefore, only made a slight bow to his speech, and gave all my attention to Belvidera. — You have heard so much on the subject of her inimitable powers, that I need only say, it was too much in all conscience, as you used to exclaim on many occasions. — There he sat, like Eve's toad, endeavouring to pour in to my ear counsel no less pernicious than those of her tempter. — It is not that I heard them quite so distinctly as to our cost, she did; nor if I had, should

show

I, I

I, I trust, have so implicitly followed them; they were conveyed in gentle whispers through his white teeth — “ Angel — Divinity — Enchant-
 “ ing — For pity’s sake look not
 “ with such killing indifference on a
 “ man who adores you,” &c. &c. rung in my averted ear during the whole performance. How did I wish he had been born dumb, or that I could have been deaf for a while; yet, for my life, I durst not appear uneasy, lest my Edward should have thought proper to resent his behaviour. It is this apprehension which has compelled me to bear, as I have perpetually done, with his impertinent assiduity and attention, and by
 which

which he is, no doubt, encouraged to persevere. I am everlastingly in terrors lest they should some day or other meet, and a quarrel ensue. He affects to be blind to my engagement with Sir Edward, though, as it is now publicly talked of, he can be no stranger to it. I shall be obliged, Harriot, to indulge him, by complying with his pressing entreaty for an early day, merely to get quit of this vile wretch's importunities, to tell you the truth. He is, after all, rather a silly creature, my dear; for he makes use of this very plea to frighten me into it: often declaring, if I do not, he must call him to account, as he neither can, nor will suffer me to be

be thus teased — A very distant one it will not be, I fancy ; for to what purpose would it be to make an unnecessary bustle about doing the very thing which would cause me to expire were any unforeseen accident to prevent. I have no idea of such airs and graces ; he is the man of my choice ; the man after my own heart ; nay, I verily believe he knows it too. To what purpose, then, I say, affect a reluctance which I do not feel ? — I own, I should like to defer the ceremony till I could have my Fanny's company — not merely for the sake of her company neither ; but, I mean, till I was thereby assured all her troubles were at an end. This I have

urged

urged. He approves; he praises my affectionate sentiments; yet murmurs, nevertheless; but I think I shall contrive to prevail for a few weeks delay; my heart is set on it. Once certain of her felicity, I will, with one of my very best smiles, present him my hand without farther ceremony; but, till then, I cannot do it so cheerfully as I could wish. — Can you wonder at it, Harriot? — Surely you cannot, knowing, as you do, how tenderly I love her. For her sake, as well as for my engaging, my impatient Edward's, I hope her next letter will bring me more pleasing intelligence than her last. — Miss

Molef-

Molesworth, I hear, affects to speak with the utmost coldness and indifference of her faithless lover; yet, in fact, he never had addressed her in that character; for the very day my propitious stars brought him to me, was the first time of her seeing him. Still, I grant, she has some reason to feel mortified, since she knew it was intended by their parents he should in due time assume it. For my own part, I very sincerely wish she had beheld him with that indifference she pretends — it was not possible she could, indeed; nor does that woman exist, I am persuaded, who could more than herself; for he is, Harriot,

riot, elegant, lovely, accomplished —
 and, in fine, all my heart can desire.
 — And thus let me finish his enco-
 mium as well as my epistle. —

Yours,

CLARA FAULKLAND.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

[37]
— not elegant, lovely, accomplished —
and, in time, that can desire.
— And thus let me finish his enco-
— mine as well as my epistle. —

Yours,

CLARA FARRINGTON.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.